

# CHAPTER 7

## GENDER POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICAN CENSUSES: THE CASE OF BRAZIL AND ECUADOR

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### ABSTRACT

*Population censuses collect socio-demographic and economic information regularly and in an institutionalized manner. The decision of what topics to include in their questionnaires reflects political priorities, but also it is a materialization of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991; Loveman, 2005). Gender practices – including budgeting, policy-making, implementation and monitoring of programs – depend significantly on census results. Understanding the institutional dynamics of public statistics sheds light on structural obstacles to exercise gender rights. To study this phenomenon, the authors look at the last century of the Brazilian and Ecuadorian censuses. The research provides a better understanding about the process of including or rejecting questions related to gender, specifically the arguments used in the process of selecting questions. Brazil and Ecuador were chosen because of the different profiles of each of their statistical institutions. The Brazilian institute, IBGE, is a larger, stable and semi-autonomous statistical office; Brazil has conducted population censuses since the nineteenth century. The Ecuadorian institute, INEC, is a smaller and more politically dependent statistical office; it has conducted population censuses since 1950.*

*Using archival analysis within the questionnaires and interviewing key demographers, activists and statisticians in both countries, the authors argue that the presence or absence of gender questions in the Brazilian and Ecuadorian censuses is historically and politically contingent. In contrast to the dominant*

*narrative that suggests that changes in the vision of public statistics is correlated with the modernization of the state, it appears that the statistical visibility of gender issues in each society does not follow a linear path.*

**Keywords:** Census; census methods; gender; public policy; public statistics; symbolic power

On a census day in Bolivia, a gender expert, who knows the census process very well, received the census taker at her home. While she was answering the questionnaire next to her partner, she realized the census taker had not asked her a question. She addressed the census taker, “You still need to ask me one thing; about who the householder is.” The census taker answered: “I already completed it, I wrote it’s your husband.” The interviewer, who had the obligation to ask the question, never considered that she – and not her husband – could be the householder. So, the expert asked the interviewer to make the correction: she was the householder.

Population censuses are instruments that reveal the political priorities of a country: not only by their contents, but also by the political forces acting to decide which variables should be measured. Therefore, data collection methods – and their nuances – should be taken into account when analyzing processes, stereotypes and cultural factors that produce gender biases (UNECE, 2010). A better understanding of the absence and presence of some themes and measures in the census is a crucial issue, since they represent a materialization of symbolic power that states have on the monopoly of statistical information (Bourdieu, 1991).

There are analytical exercises that reveal the historicity and political economy behind the racial categories in the Latin American censuses (Loveman, 2005). However, there are no systematic analyses of the same kind studying gender,<sup>1</sup> which causes a conceptual void to understand how, when and under what conditions states formalize metrics to build the social (mis)understanding of gender. It is imperative to pay attention to the gender specificity and bias in censuses (UNFPA – United Nations, 2014), since it reflects ongoing disputes of spaces of power. According to Flavia Marco Navarro (2012), the interface between public policies and gender indicators is challenging, not only because the different degrees of preferences and willingness of political and social actors, but also because the “ignorance concerning the existence and usefulness of these indicators” (p. 8). This occurs despite explicit calls to governments to collect gender statistics, as stated by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 5 expressly refers to gender equality. Its objective is to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls. In this sense, there is an agreement to use 14 different indicators to measure the advances. Nevertheless, six of them are not accessible in most of countries. In this case, the data collection about gender itself should be part of a

public policy, because it would allow to control the achievements and results of the efforts to reach the SDG.

Gender issues have been relevant since the first population counts made in Antiquity. For example, in the statistics for the Roman population, the number of citizens, calculated by historians, varies considerably. According to Coen [van Galen \(2015\)](#), these numerical differences are related to the different perspectives on gender and on Roman citizenship at that time, but also related to the gender perspectives among modern historians who studied the subject. Gender biases play a role in the interpretation of numbers: a unilateral emphasis on male citizenship has led to the abandonment of women as independent citizens in Antiquity census statistics ([van Galen, 2015](#)). The gender bias in the statistics reflects the gender bias of state institutions.

In the history of the Latin American counts, there was a *pre-statistical* period (1555–1774) in which the data was based on indirect and occasional reports. It was followed by a *proto-statistical* period (1775–1880), when a clear purpose began to exist in counting the population ([Sánchez-Albornoz, 1974](#)). However, until 1850, most of the population counts only enumerated adult males, since this allowed the state to establish a system for income control. With this information in hand, it was possible to estimate the country's wealth and register its citizens to collect tax or for military purposes ([O'Brien, 1973](#)). This conjuncture was one of the origins of a structural inattention to the measurement of gender differences and inequalities ([UNFPA, 2014](#)).

The period of the modern census in the region began in Colombia in 1851. According to Donald J. [O'Brien \(1973\)](#), censuses were done only in the main cities. In the case of Brazil, the first census was conducted in 1872, beginning a period when many Latin American countries also first performed their censuses. However, countries like Ecuador, Uruguay and Bolivia only conducted their first censuses after 1950. The first questionnaires sought information on sex, age, marital status and, in some cases, nationality and economic information. Thereafter, some improvements were incorporated, reflecting the social demands and the institutional flexibility – or inflexibility – of each era.

In order to understand how censuses materialize the concentration of preferences and symbolic power of the state ([Loveman, 2005](#)), it is necessary to historicize the presence or absence of some themes and questions about gender, analyzing the historical contingencies which have influenced their design. Virginia Guzmán, as cited in Flavia Marco [Navarro, 2012](#), points out that we must focus not only in the “political will and forces of the actors who mobilize new interpretations of the gender order, but also in the institutionality in which they act, which anticipates and guides the interpretation of reality” (p. 22). The operation of public forces can redefine new contexts for gender relations.

To understand this dynamic of gender and public policy, our study presents the results of archival and qualitative research. The goal is to describe the progresses and setbacks presented in censuses regarding gender issues, as well as to understand the mechanisms that facilitated or obstructed those changes. In addition, it looks at censuses as instruments of public policy and existing in the contexts of a patriarchal state.

We chose Brazil and Ecuador since they allow a comparison that helps to understand two distinct processes in Latin America. Brazil has an institutionalized statistical system conducted by IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística). It is one of the countries with the largest population on the continent (more than 200 million inhabitants) and has a long history of conducting population censuses. Ecuador has a mid-level institutional-statistical development. Censuses are conducted by INEC (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos). The country has a smaller population than Brazil (17 million inhabitants) and has some institutional instability. Our aim is to offer a comparative perspective which makes it possible to interpret progresses and setbacks regarding gender issues at a statistical-official level, but inserted in distinct contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to understand the mechanisms by which Latin American censuses have included or not included some questions related to gender. However, we are also interested in understanding the vision behind these decisions. We pay special attention to interpreting the narrative behind some options and the historical conditions and contexts that influenced decisions regarding the inclusion of gender topics and questions. This procedure permits us to understand the evolution of the census not only as an administrative-technocratic instrument, but also as a political institution that fulfills social functions under the influence of administrators.

Schkolnik (2010) argues that gender perspectives must be understood at all stages of the census process: from the moment the questions are being defined, through data collection, and analysis of the statistics. It should be a constant variable in formulating, applying and investigating the results of the questionnaires. Saleem Jahangir and Shafi (2013) have studied this same question in India. They point out the need to pay special attention to aspects that may provide different information when referring to women, that is, governments, census institutions and census takers must be aware of gender biases that can affect answers and results. In this sense, aspects such as the issue of low-paid or non-paid work performed in the household or informal jobs are usually under-informed by the interviewee and under-estimated by the censuses. This example of India fits into the Latin American context since there still exists a huge proportion of women performing jobs inside their houses, such as craftwork, which they usually do not formally consider as work.

Our work focus on four questions: (1) What questions allow states to obtain information about sex and gender? (2) When were they included in the censuses? (3) Who decided to include them and why? and (4) What institutional and political conditions influenced these decisions?

Concerning the census questions, through the guidance of gender experts and census experts, we seek to verify:

1. The moment in which the census questionnaire explicitly expanded the possibility to register the gender of the head of household. (In Portuguese and

Spanish, languages spoken in Brazil and Ecuador, the term “head” – *chefe* or *jefe* – is masculine; that is, gendered. For this reason, it is necessary to explicitly ask the gender of the head of household.)

2. The moment when questions about work and income included all the people in the household (and not just the head).
3. The moment when questions regarding unpaid work at home or household work were included.

This research analyzes Brazil’s census questionnaires from 1940 to 2010 and Ecuador’s from 1950 to 2010. After understanding the process of constructing questions in the two countries separately, we try to identify the differences of the inclusion of questions concerning gender roles. The analysis concludes with a conceptual argument which allows us to comprehend the dynamics of power and the preferences behind the inclusion or exclusion of gender variables. This allows us to explore the factors that make the census production process permeable or not to the needs of information demanded from political actors. The objective is to understand how producers, users and critics of census statistics not only apply pressure on institutions to include more questions related to gender, but also to understand the limitations of the available information of gender as a social issue.

Methodologically, the study uses archival documents of census questionnaires, census taker’s manuals, and in-depth interviews with key actors in Brazil and Ecuador. In the sample of interviews, we included officers from the statistical and census institutes of each country and key experts who have promoted, used and discussed the census information regarding gender. The interviews conducted are distributed as follows (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Interviews Performed by Country and by Segment.

	Brazil	Ecuador
IBGE/INEC	3	2
Academy/Experts	3	3
Social Organizations	1	2

The interviews concerning Ecuador and Brazil were conducted in Spanish and in Portuguese by the authors and translated, coded and analyzed in two stages: (1) by country, and (2) comparatively.

## RESULTS

### *Brazil*

A famous Brazilian samba of 1940, composed by Assis Valente, reveals a common scene of gender bias on surveys, when conducted within households. The lyrics tells the story of a census taker working in a *favela*: when the man noticed there were no engagement ring in the woman’s finger, he started to ask about her husband behavior and her marital status.

What the song describes, through jokes, are examples of the gender bias that census takers often fail to prevent.

In Brazil, censuses have been conducted since 1872. Since the time of the monarchy (1872), there were plenty of issues which have been researched through censuses, such as: fertility, mortality, occupation, migration, race/ethnicity, indigenous languages and pensions; all included because of the needs and interests of the moment (Oliveira, 2003). New concerns about gender brought the need to create measurements with respect to this subject, usually materialized in indexes with the capacity to account for differences between men and women (Branisa, Klasen, Ziegler, Drechsler, & Jütting, 2014).

What the census does in terms of concerns with gender is to ask if you are a man or a woman. This topic is not suitable for censuses, but for other types of surveys, also conducted by IBGE. Gender relations, which are relations of power, are not well measured with a photograph (as in the case of census), but with research that are carried out in smaller intervals. (Academic 1, personal communication, July, 2018)

With a similar view, Academic 2 says:

To understand the reality of a gender's relations in a country, the census has a lot of limitations (although it is very broad and has a long historical series). In addition, [gender relations] have many important issues that do not fit into the population censuses, for example, the time-use. For a good gender analysis, a transversal research is not sufficient. It is much more worthwhile to do a longitudinal research, in which people are accompanied over time. (Personal communication, July, 2018)

Some demographers identify that gender bias is best measured through surveys that can capture data on time-use, consumption patterns, family budgets or health surveys. However, inside the IBGE, multiple perceptions coexists. One person interviewed from the institute (IBGE 3) argues that there should be a gender concern, not only in assessing the results, but also in the process of building a dataset, whether in surveys or censuses.

Regarding censuses in Brazil, three criteria usually prevail for the selection of themes: (1) topics that can provide an improvement of the quality of the public policy at municipal level (e.g., information about city mobility); (2) information that is legally required (e.g., questions concerning physical disabilities); and (3) data which, for its low frequency, can only be registered by the census (e.g., careers of college graduated people in Brazil).

It is in the second criterion that there seems to be some opportunity for feminist social movements to influence IBGE to include questions that can respond to their interests and preoccupations. The *quilombola's* movement, a social movement of populations that inherited the lands of enslaved groups, pressured the state to include questions about their population that will probably become part of the 2020 census (IBGE 1, online communication, May, 2018). They exerted pressure through organized women. In a similar example, for the 2010 questionnaires, the strong pressure of indigenous movements resulted in the inclusion of three specific questions regarding them.<sup>2</sup> Pressure from the social movement would be a way for women's groups to promote questions that could become part of the census (e.g., concerning domestic violence, as requested by the SDG 5 measurement, or abortion). For an IBGE researcher (IBGE 3, personal communication,

September 2018) one of the reasons for the absence of good time-use research<sup>3</sup> was the lack of enough pressure from feminist movements.

Time-use surveys became a field of action for Brazilian feminist social movements during the development phase of the questionnaires for the 2000 and 2010 censuses. In 2008, the Technical Committee for Gender Studies and Time-Use was created to promote a more engaged gender perspective in official statistics. The committee was composed of representatives of the Federal Women's Secretariat, the IBGE, the Economic Institute and international organizations (Santos & Simões, 2018). Many attempts to include a good time-use study lasted until 2014, but they were not sufficient. Currently, there is little information available about time-use and household work, which comes from an annual survey and gives information about the time-use of those who engage in unpaid work in their own household (i.e., housework).

Although there are some efforts to expand census questions, another line of thought within the IBGE (especially among classical demographers) holds that the census is a survey suited for population counting and, therefore, to have a larger number of questions is to deviate from the original goal. This line of thought can be identified in a letter that demographers and researchers sent to the IBGE in 2018. In this document, they exposed their preference for concentrating the focus on census coverage. In their opinion, to add new and more questions is to risk the quality of the information collected. They stated their "concern for quality and coverage of the information about age and sex, which are essential to settle the number of the initial population to do the population projection." According to them, "in the current demographic context of low natality, the recount of the population of children and youth as well as the information about women in reproductive age become even more essential to improve the projection of the population" (Carta, 2018, p. 1). The 2020 Brazilian census will have 76 questions. Since 2016, thematic groups have met at IBGE to discuss the questions.

The letter from demographers highlights their concern about the counting of women, although seems detached from a broader vision of gender. They especially reinforce their understanding of the priority to the census coverage. In this sense, the letter demands: (1) the reduction of the number of questions, (2) better training of the census takers, and (3) a better prior evaluation before the application of the census. Currently, the main role that women are assigned in the census questionnaire regards motherhood. This has happened since the 1970 census, when women started to be responsible for information having to do with the birth and death of the children at home.

Duarte (2018) listed the "advances" and "improvements in the collection" of the census in 2020, mentioning 10 points – among them, migration, child labor, fertility, disabilities and years of schooling. Gender issues only appeared, in some way, in the topic of "new family arrangements." There were six themes being requested by the social movements and experts and not included in the questionnaire; among them: gender identity, sexual orientation and domestic violence (there were requests also to include homeless population). The argument for the exclusion of gender issues are related to: "complex concepts," "identity subject," "sensitive issues," and "questionnaire is already too long" (Duarte, 2018).

In terms of data collection, Susana Schkolnik (2010) affirms that “a fundamental aspect of the gender approach is the measurement of the degree of the economic autonomy of women” (p. 26). The training and sensibility of the person who will conduct the survey in a household is pivotal. According to Schkolnik, the majority of censuses fail in gender attention, allowing only a very limited approximation to the issue. This is due to a partial absence of the *personal income* category, which is essential for the definition of economic autonomy. In the Brazilian case, the question was included more clearly in the most recent censuses; however, as noted in the letter of the demographers, there are still problems regarding its data collection.

Finally, for feminist groups, there does not seem to exist a very strong interest in influencing the collection of census data. Only in the case of black feminist groups was there a more intense effort to do so in the 1980s, mostly focused on the need to improve measurements of color/ethnicity. Their endeavors were to improve the quality of the counting. One of the interviewees from the social movement, Social Organization 1 (phone communication, August, 2018) reports that their demands of IBGE always had to do with the issue of ethnicity and not with general women’s issues. The existence of the intersectional approach is identified, but without gender specificity. Four feminist activists contacted during the research said they didn’t focus on placing demands on IBGE.

Our additional intention is to outline these findings through a quantitative analysis that relates to the economic and political conjuncture of the country with the number of census questions and frequency of the population census. For example, what is the relationship between the economic and political conditions of Brazil and the size of the questionnaire? Fig. 1 shows the relation between

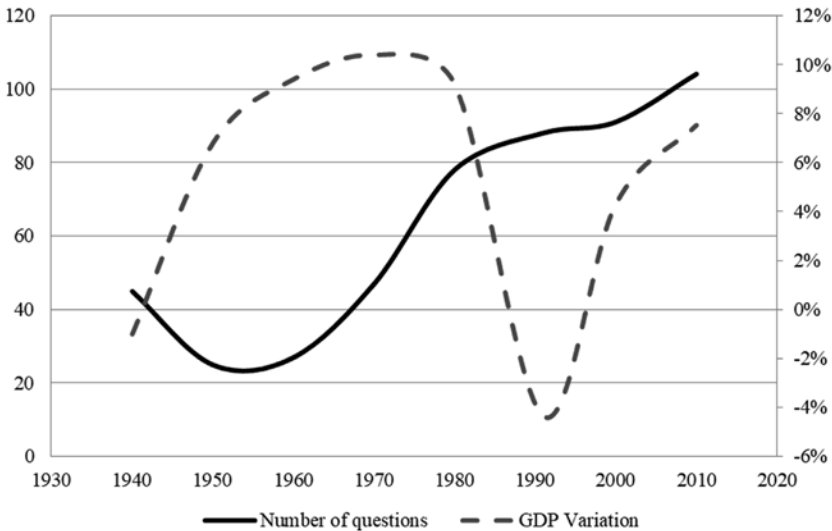


Fig. 1. Economy x Number of Questions – Brazil. Source: Own Construction Based on IBGE Data.



the economic situation of the country (operationalized as the variation of gross domestic product – GDP) and the number of questions included in the census questionnaire.

We observed a sensitive association between both variables, especially in the period after 1980. Before that, the number of questions grew, probably as a result of the modernization of the Brazilian statistical system and the consolidation of the IBGE as the governing body of public statistics. However, the increase in the amount of questions stops in relative terms exactly at the time of the greatest economic crisis of 2000. From that moment on, there were a relative improvement in economic conditions, which is also associated with the increase in the number of the census questions.

We carried out the same exercise but comparing the evolution of the number of questions in the census questionnaire with an indicator of the quality of democracy in the country – the Polity Index – that summarizes several dimensions of a country's institutional conditionality over time on a 21-point scale ranging from –10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy) (Fig. 2).<sup>4</sup>

In this case, we observe a lower association between both variables, although with some negative correlation in the period prior to the 1970s and a positive correlation after the 1990s. It is easier to interpret the rebound of the last stage, as it could mean that the country stabilized its condition in political terms and this created a context for the application of the census to respond to a more stable political-institutional structure. This dissociation allows us to speculate initially that, in the case of Brazil, there is a relatively greater influence of economic rather

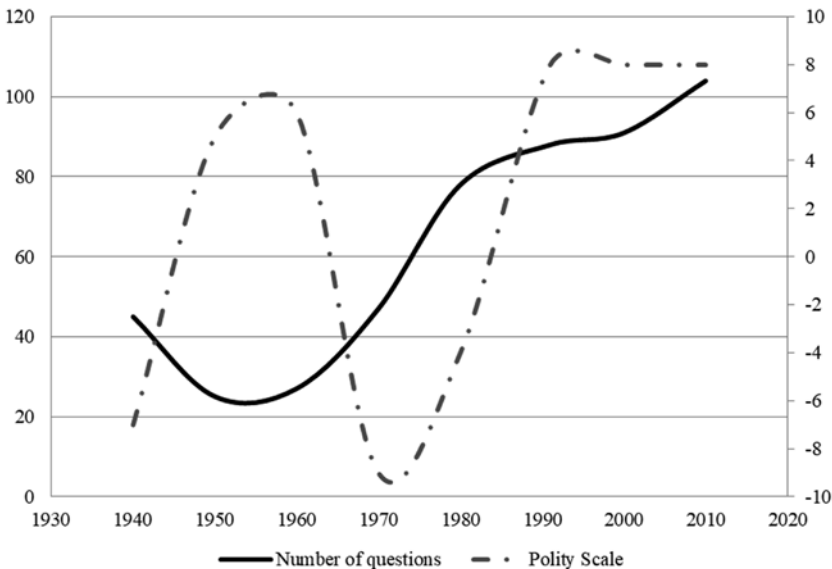


Fig. 2. Political Scenario x Number of Questions – Brazil. Source: Own Construction Based on IBGE Data and Polity IV.

than political factors when evaluating aggregate institutional elements influencing the population census.

These initial speculations take a concrete form when we identify the Brazilian institutional particularities. For example, when analyzing the evolution of the number of questions or the topics on gender included in the census, these can be related to the functioning political regime. [Table 2](#) presents this comparison for the case of Brazil. As time passes and regimes change, we can also identify the increase of number of questions and complexity concerning women issues.

About the three aspects we proposed to follow:

1. The moment in which the census questionnaire expanded the answer options so that the householder could also be a woman.
2. The moment when questions about the work and income of other people in the house were included.
3. The moment when questions regarding unpaid work at home, household work, were included.

The use of the terms head of household and head of family (both gendered in Portuguese: *chefe do domicílio* and *chefe de família*) had a frequent presence in the census questionnaire until 1990. In 1980, they split the two questions and included one asking about the kin relation to the head of household and kin relation to head of family – separating both. The word *chefe* (literally “boss,” feminine) has no use in Portuguese, so the question, by keeping its structure with the word *chefe*, kept the implicit idea that the person in charge would always be a man. In the 2000 questionnaire, the question was changed to: “What is your relationship to the person responsible for the household,” eliminating the masculine connotation. However, there wasn’t a clear definition about the meaning of the expression “responsible” for the census taker nor for the respondent ([Cavenaghi & Alves, 2011](#)). In the 2010 census, the question was changed again to: “The responsibility of the household belongs to ...,” including an explanation in the questionnaire: “the responsible person for the household is the one who is recognized as such by the other residents.” It is important to notice that, in the case of Brazil, from the first census until the year 2000, the wordhead (in masculine) was used (see [Table 6](#)). [Table 3](#) shows how it was expected that the spouse was a woman (i.e., the head of household was a man). In the second case ([Table 4](#)), in 2000 questionnaire, it is assumed that the person who is answering, who is not responsible, can be male, as a first option.

According to Academic 3 (personal communication, August 2018), a gender expert, the changes in the wording of the question concerning the householder led to an increase from 24% to 40% in the number of women responsible for households in less than a decade. One of her explanations for this increase is related to a possible confusion, from the part of the individuals answering the census, regarding the very definition of “responsibility for the household.” According to Academic 3, the individuals who answered this question could have easily interpreted the question “Who is responsible for the household?” as both (a) “who is economically responsible for the household?” – as originally intended by the

**Table 2.** Statistical Institutional Evolution – Brazil.

Year	History/Institutionality	Number of Questions	Questions about Household	Questions about Population	Census Observations	President	Regime Type (Polity Scale)
1872	First General Census					Monarchy	-6
1890	II General Census					Deodoro da Fonseca	-3
1900	III General Census					Campos Sales	-3
1920	IV General Census				The 1910 census was not carried out.	Epitacio Pessoa	3
1936	Creation of the IBGE				The 1930 census was not carried out.	Getúlio Vargas	
1940	First Census of the IBGE/V General Census	45	0	45	First questions about children born alive and dead.	Getúlio Vargas	-7
1950	VI General Census	25	0	25		Eurico Gaspar Dutra	5
1960	VII General Census	27	0	27		Juscelino Kubitschek	6
1970	VIII General Census	47	15	32	Fertility questions made specific for women.	Emílio Médici	-9
1980	IX General Census	78	21	57	More information on fertility and mortality.	João Figueiredo	-4
1991	X General Census	88	27	61	The census was postponed one year.	Fernando Collor de Melo	8
2000	XI General Census	91	24	67	Group of 6 questions exclusively for women.	Fernando Henrique Cardoso	8
2010	XII General Census	104	33	71	Details of kinship ties/Group of 7 questions for women.	Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva	8

Source: IBGE/ Polity IV.

**Table 3.** 1970 Census – Questionnaire.

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Se vive em companhia de cônjuge —  
espôsa(o), companheira(o), etc. —  
indicar a natureza da união.

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Se não vive em companhia de cônjuge —  
espôsa(o), companheira(o),  
etc. — indicar se é:

If living in the company of a spouse – wife (husband), female partner (male partner), etc. – indicate the kind of union.

If not living in the company of a spouse – wife (husband), female partner (male partner), etc. – indicate if it is:

Source: IBGE – questionnaire 1970.

**Table 4.** 2000 Census – Questionnaire.

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**4.02 - QUAL É A RELAÇÃO COM A PESSOA RESPONSÁVEL PELO DOMICÍLIO?**

<input type="checkbox"/> 01 - PESSOA RESPONSÁVEL <input type="checkbox"/> 02 - CÔNJUGE, COMPANHEIRO(a) <input type="checkbox"/> 03 - FILHO(a), ENTEADO(a) <input type="checkbox"/> 04 - PAI, MÃE, SOGRO(a)	<input type="checkbox"/> 05 - NETO(a), BISNETO(a) <input type="checkbox"/> 06 - IRMÃO, IRMÃ <input type="checkbox"/> 07 - OUTRO PARENTE <input type="checkbox"/> 08 - AGREGADO(a)
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**4.03 - QUAL É A RELAÇÃO COM A PESSOA RESPONSÁVEL PELA FAMÍLIA?**

<input type="checkbox"/> 01 - PESSOA RESPONSÁVEL <input type="checkbox"/> 02 - CÔNJUGE, COMPANHEIRO(a) <input type="checkbox"/> 03 - FILHO(a), ENTEADO(a) <input type="checkbox"/> 04 - PAI, MÃE, SOGRO(a)	<input type="checkbox"/> 05 - NETO(a), BISNETO(a) <input type="checkbox"/> 06 - IRMÃO, IRMÃ <input type="checkbox"/> 07 - OUTRO PARENTE <input type="checkbox"/> 08 - AGREGADO(a)
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4.02 – Which is the kin relationship with the responsible of household?

01 – Responsible person    05 – Grandson (daughter), grand grandson (daughter).

02 – Spouse, male partner (female)    06 – Brother, sister.

03 – Son (daughter), stepson (daughter)    07 – Other kinship.

04 – Father, mother, stepfather (mother)    08 – Non-related.

4.03 What is the kin relationship with the person responsible for the family?

01 – Responsible person    05 – Grandson (daughter), grand grandson (daughter).

02 – Spouse, male partner (female)    06 – Brother, sister.

03 – Son (daughter), stepson (daughter)    07 – Other kinship.

04 – Father, mother, stepfather (mother)    08 – Non-related.

Source: IBGE – questionnaire 2000.

census –; or (b) “who takes care of the household?”, meaning who is responsible for tasks such as housework. In other words, the population could have easily interpreted the question as “Who is the person who spends more time in the house?”

Regarding women’s work inside their houses, before the 1980 census, there was an explicit recommendation to not consider the work performed in the household as an occupation. In the instructions to the 1940 census it can be read: “(...) the housewives are, by their nature, unpaid and will not be considered in the calculation of the active population.” In the 1991 census, the question about work gives the interviewee an option, among other possible answers, to respond that she/he works but without payment. At the same time, this questionnaire is also dubious because it allows a person who claims to not work to claim their occupation is to do the housework. The 2000 census, which seems to have a greater concern for women’s issues, contains “some work done at home” among other paid options.

Even though we have not analyzed the census of 1872, the first census of Brazil, collected during the time of the monarchy and slavery, it is important to mention that they considered the work done at home as “work.” It is interesting to notice that the question about housework was included in terms of how the population was considered in relation to professions. Since they did not question payment, the main issue was to differentiate whether the work was done by men or women, slaves or not, Brazilian or foreigners (IBGE, 1872).

Brazil is an interesting case in which the gender questions seems to be put aside when it concerns to the Census. The huge and well institutionalized IBGE, the institution responsible for the Census, has hardly paid attention to the subject. The interviews showed that maybe it has to do with the lack of pressure from the feminist movement itself, but also because it had being seen until now as a minor issue for IBGE. The Ecuadorian case, however, shows other variables and narratives.

### *Ecuador*

Ecuador has a more recent history of institutionalized censuses. The General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses (Dirección General de Estadística y Censos) was established in 1944, and in 1950 it executed the first population census. It was almost 100 years after the first census in Latin America and 78 years after the first Brazilian census. This first census included 21 questions and laid the first foundations of the population counting reference in the country; therefore, gender issues were implicit and imperceptible. One of the most relevant aspects of this first Ecuadorian census was the influence of an indigenous female leader, Dolores Cacuango, who advocated guaranteeing the census takers access to indigenous areas, which were resistant to census operations. Unfortunately, there are no official records of the questionnaire applied in that year, or documents about the process of their discussion and implementation.

The next census was carried out in 1962. It also suffered severe security problems due to indigenous people's rejection. Again, the ethnic tensions set the pace and the discussion of gender topics was left for another more propitious occasion. When analyzing the 1962 questionnaire, there is evidence of a biased attitude toward men as the default householder. The first question asks for the names of the members of the household with an explicit instruction: "Start by the head of household [*jefe de familia*, masculine]," while the second answer is meant to identify the relationship of each member to the head (*jefe*), starting with "wife or woman." In other words, there was no possibility of registering a woman as a head of the household.

The 1974 census presents a slight change to this question: it assigns a box to identify the head of household (*jefe*), and in the next question it allows for the classification of each household member as male or female (including the head). Additionally, "wife or woman" disappears as the first option for the rest of the members and the category "spouse" appears. The 1982 census contained almost the same structure and questions, demonstrating that the tensions concerning the census were not related to the content of the questionnaire but to the logistical operative. Eight years later, the 1990 census changed the question about the householder, eliminating the option to classify the head of household as male or female and added the option "male head/female head" (*jefela*) to the same question. The rest of the questionnaire is similar to the 1982 and 1974 versions.

Regarding the dynamics of the inclusion or exclusion of topics in the 1990s, an Ecuadorian gender social activist asserted: "the 90's census and previous ones were completely at the discretion of INEC. There were no consultation processes, at least in the sense to hear demands from social groups" (Social Organization, personal communication, June 2018). Another interviewee justified this position arguing the interests of the country at that time were to gather information about the whole population, rather than cover gender-specific issues:

The country had no institutions, we were not even sure about an approximate size of the population; thus, the priority was counting people. I doubt that people were thinking about discussing issues related to women. (Academic, video conference, July 2018)

The 2001 census questionnaire brought important changes to its questions. It incorporated a new section on migrations that inquired about how many members of the household migrated outside the country, including a question about the sex of the migrant. Regarding the householder, there was another change: when inquiring into the relationship of each member of the household, it was mentioned the "kinship or relationship with the head" of household in feminine and masculine (*jefe* or *jefa*). Additionally, the section for general characteristics included an opportunity to specify if the *jefe* or *jefa* (explicitly using both genders in Spanish) is male or female. Discussing the reason for this change, a social organization activist mentions:

The 2001 census had strong collaboration with international organizations; the changes in the process came from outside of the country. The changes in the questionnaire came mainly from international suggestions and from few internal demands that were just starting to appear. (Social Organization, personal communication, May 2018)

This evolution reveals that, in the Ecuadorian case, the inclusion of gender issues was slow if not stagnant. In this regard, an INEC official mentions:

The process prior to 2000 was impoverished and laborious. Very few people understood the need to do censuses. With the formalization of the state, [the census] began to modernize (...). Before 1990, there were not even questions related to the household. What made the difference for the 2001 census was a strong international support. I would dare to say that what the international organizations suggested was promptly accepted internally, but there was no discussion within the country. (INEC, video conference, August 2018).

This is reinforced by the opinion of academics who emphasize that the political-institutional problems inside Ecuador at that time were too serious, displacing the gender discussion to a different priority:

The country had 7 presidents in those years, the worst institutional crisis in its history, we became dollarized, millions of people had to migrate, most of the key functions of the state were in the hands of people who did not last in their posts more than six months. That institutional fragility made it easier to assimilate international recommendations, because activism was first concentrated in their own survival. (Academic, personal communication, June 2018)

This is how Ecuador went from not having statistics in the 1950s, to having, in the new millennium, census data that is moderately readable in aggregate form, but always downplaying the political processes of gender participation.

In this regard, the 2010 census presented a major difference as there was a broad institutional effort to include citizen participation in formulating the census: "Public workshops were organized to debate questions by topic and there was a section exclusively addressing gender" (INEC, personal communication, June 2018). With this input, the questionnaire grew substantially to include 15 questions about the household. In total, it contained 74 questions, the largest questionnaire in the history of Ecuadorian censuses. Regarding the question of the householder, it improved the instructions for the census taker, maintaining the alternative of *jefe* (masculine) or *jefa* (feminine) of household, but also adding an explicit warning to the census taker: "do not forget: the interview must address each person directly." This was the result of an effort to improve the quality of the information. In this regard, one of the key persons in charge of the 2010 planning mentioned that

in the training, it was made a lot of emphasis on asking about sex, avoiding any type of assumption. This direction was focused during the initial registration of the questionnaire, and also in the registration of each member of the household. (Academic, personal communication, June 2018)

Additionally, there were three important changes in the 2010 questionnaire that need to be highlighted. First, the alternative "unpaid worker" was included in the labor section and a separate question explicitly asked whether the person had worked inside or outside the household. Second, a question about who takes care of the children under five years old was included and offered the following answers: mother, father, relatives and acquaintances for free. This question, according to two interviewees, was an innovation recognized internationally because it improves information about women's potentialities and limitations in the labor market by cross-referencing labor and social conditions. Finally, a question was added regarding the current age of the first child born alive, a variable

that allowed counteracting an analysis on generational changes with respect to fertility.

These changes in the 2010 census may be related to the socio-political conditions of the time:

What made the difference in the last census [2010] was the openness to the discussion. It inflated the questionnaire, but it permitted the census to be understood as a civic and participatory exercise. The fear was that a long questionnaire could provoke a higher undercount. That turned out to be false: the 2010 census had one of the best coverages historically. (Academic, personal communication, May 2018)

When analyzing the available documents of each census, only the 2010 version contained explicit information about the criteria for included questions: (1) comparability with the questions asked in previous censuses; (2) international recommendations; and (3) the needs of the country. This allows us to speculate that it is precisely this ambivalence of orientation that allowed the Institute of Ecuador (INEC) to be more permeable to social demands.

Following the same structure as the Brazilian case, we have shown that the evolution of the number of questions in Ecuador can be related with two factors: (1) the economic situation of the country, operationalized by the variation of the GDP and (2) the political situation, operationalized by the Polity Index. In Fig. 3 we can see that, unlike the Brazilian case, Ecuador's economic situation does not seem to be so related to the evolution of its census questions.

Ecuador's economic situation had an abrupt increase in the 1970s, to then fall into at least two sustained crises: in the mid-80s and at the end of the 1990s. However, the number of questions grew at a conservative pace until the year 2000,

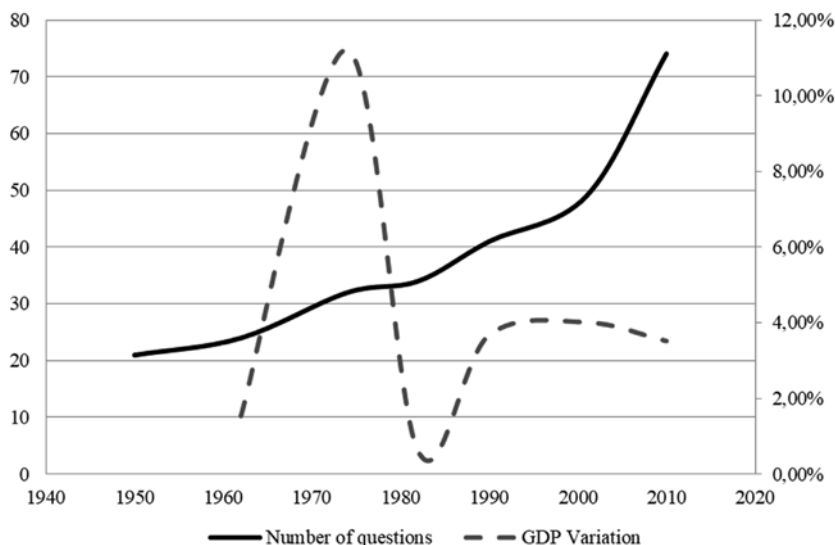


Fig. 3. Economy x Number of Questions – Ecuador. *Source:* Own Construction Based on INEC Data.



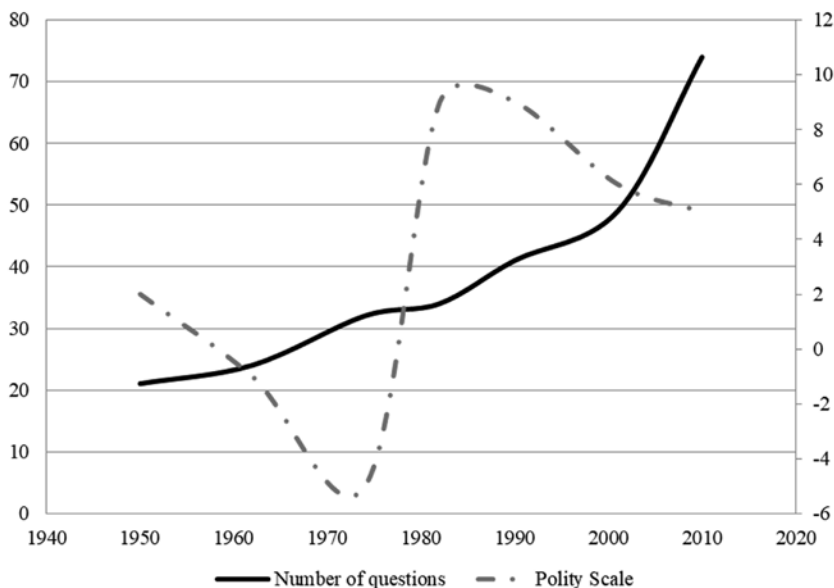


Fig. 4. Political Scenario x Number of Questions – Ecuador. *Source:* Own Construction Based on INEC Data and Polity IV.

but the 2010 census brought a significant increase that broke the trend. Thus economic conditions influenced the questionnaire less than the Brazilian case (Fig. 4).

In the case of political influence, we again compare the evolution of the Polity scale, which attempts to quantify the quality of the democratic system. In this case, it seems that the unstable political evolution of Ecuador had very slight association to the conditions of the census questionnaire. Thus, it makes us think that the Ecuadorian case seems be associated to other factors. Table 3 describes additional conditions of this evolution for the Ecuadorian case, where we can highlight the diversity in the institutional conditions of INEC, which could explain in part the factors that influenced the way of proposing and carrying out the censuses (Table 5).

#### Comparison by Themes

In order to synthesize the comparison between Brazil and Ecuador, we present in Table 6 three dimensions of comparative analysis throughout history: (1) the presence (or absence) of the gender aspect in the question on head of household<sup>5</sup>; (2) the presence (or absence) of the question on the income of every person in the household; and (3) the presence (or absence) of the question about whether unpaid household work is recognized as work. The differentiation of types of questions, formats and times demonstrates that the visibility of the gender problem depends on historical, geographical, political and institutional contingencies (Table 6).

Table 5. Statistical Institutional Evolution – Ecuador.

Year	History/Institutionality	Number of Questions <sup>a</sup>	Questions about Household	Questions about Population	Census Observations	President	Regime Type (Polity Scale)
1944	Creation of the General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses	NA	NA			Arroyo del Río, Navarro Allende, Salem Gallegos, Velasco Ibarra	-1
1950	First Population Census	21			Publication: 1960/ data was not fully published	Galo Plaza Lasso	2
1962	II Population Census and I Housing Census	24			Inclusion of Census Cartography	Carlos Julio Arosemena Monroy	-1
1963	General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses becomes Division of the National Planning Board	NA				Carlos Julio Arosemena Monroy, Ramon Castro Jijón	-1
1970	Creation of the National Institute of Statistics	NA				José María Velasco Ibarra	0
1973	Creation of the National Census Office	NA				Guillermo Rodríguez Lara	-5
1974	III Population Census and II Housing Census	32				Guillermo Rodríguez Lara	-5
1976	Integration of the INE with the ONC and creation of the INEC	NA				Alfredo Poveda Burbano	-5
1982	IV Population Census and III Housing Census	34			Publication of results; 1985	Oswaldo Hurtado Larrea	9
1990	V Population Census and IV Housing Census	41	8	23		Rodrigo Borja Cevallos	9
2001	VI Population Census and V Housing Census	49	8	28		Gustavo NoboaBejarano	6
2010	VII Population Census and VI Housing Census	74	15	40	First census with participation in thematic sections	Rafael Correa Delgado	5

Source: INEC/Polity IV.

<sup>a</sup>It includes also questions about housing and migration.

**Table 6.** Comparative of Evolution of Questions by Topic.

Census Round	Census Year	Topic	Brazil – Questions/Instructions	Ecuador – Questions/Instructions
			Brazil / Ecuador	
1940	1940	Head of household/ Household	What is the condition of the respondent in the household? (Masculine)	There was no census.
1950	1950		What is the condition of the respondent in the household? (Masculine)	First census, no questionnaire available.
1960	1960/1962		Kinship or relation to the head of family? (Masculine)	Kinship or relation to the head of family (masculine). <sup>a</sup> Wife or woman cannot be the head.
1970	1970/1974		Kinship or relation to the head/boss? (Masculine)	Kinship or relation to the head of family (masculine), adding the alternative “partner” and an option to register the sex of every household member.
1980	1980/1982		Kinship or relation to the head of household? (Masculine)/Kinship or relation to the head of family? (Masculine)	Kinship or relation to the head of family (masculine), adding the alternative “partner” and an option to register the sex of every household member.
1990	1991/1990		Kinship or relation to the head of household? (Masculine)/Kinship or relation to the head of family? (Masculine)	Kinship or relation to the head of family (masculine), adding the alternative for female head of family.
2000	2000/2001		What is your relationship to the person responsible for the household? <sup>a</sup> First options are masculine (Father, son etc.)	Kinship or relation to the male or female householder.
2010	2010		The responsibility of the household belongs to... (Co-responsibility is allowed).	Register the kinship to the male or female householder.
1940	1940	Registry of members of a household	All respondents – no question about income.	There was no census.
1950	1950		All respondents – no question about income.	First census, no questionnaire available.
1960	1960/1962		All respondents – question about income for children older than 10 years.	All respondents – no question about income.
1970	1970/1974		All respondents – question about income.	All respondents – no question about income.
1980	1980/1982		All respondents – question about income.	All respondents – no question about income.
1990	1991/1990		All respondents – question about income.	All respondents – no question about income.
2000	2000/2001		All respondents – question about income.	All respondents – no question about income.
2010	2010		All respondents – question about income.	All respondents – no question about income.

Table 6. (Continued)

Census Round	Brazil – Questions/Instructions		Ecuador – Questions/Instructions	
	Census Year Brazil / Ecuador	Topic	Brazil – Questions/Instructions	Ecuador – Questions/Instructions
1940	1940	Data collection on unpaid household work / household work / household work	What is your profession, employment or main function? *Census taker are explicitly orientated to not consider household work as an activity.	There was no census.
1950	1950		What is your profession, employment or main function? *Unpaid household work – housewife/housework is one of the options.	First census, no questionnaire available.
1960	1960/1962		If you have not worked during the last year, what is your occupation or situation? *Housework appears as an option.	Occupation was defined as “class,” one of the options was “household work.”
1970	1970/1974		If you don't work or search for a job, what is your main occupation? *Housework is considered as an option.	What did you do most of the time between the 3 and 7 of June? An option is “Only housework?”, then: “What was the category or position in the occupation you indicate?” An alternative is “unpaid family worker.”
1980	1980/1982		Do you have a regular job in the past 12 months? *Census taker are explicitly orientated to not consider household work performed in the household.	What did you do most of the time between the 7 and 13 of November? An option is “Only housework?”, then: “What was the category or position in the occupation you indicate?” An alternative is “Unpaid family worker.”
1990	1991/1990		Have you worked at least in one of the 12 past months? *There is the option “yes, without payment.” But “housework” also appears as an option for people who are not working.	What did you do last week? An alternative is “Only housework,” then: “Perhaps last week you performed some activity, even without payment?” Then: “What was the category or position in the occupation you indicate?” An alternative is “Unpaid family worker.”
2000	2000/2001		In the week July 23–29, 2000, have you worked in any paid activity? *It considers the option “some household service”/In the week July 23–29, 2000, did you work without payment? *It considers the option “at home.”	What did you do last week? An alternative is “Only housework,” then: “Perhaps last week you performed some activity, even without payment?” Then: “What was the category or position in the occupation you indicate?” An alternative is “Unpaid family worker.”
2010	2010		In the week July 25–31, 2010, have you worked at least one hour receiving a retribution either as money, products or other benefits?	What did you do last week? There is no explicit option concerning household work. If the answer is “I did not work”, one of the alternatives is “did household work.” For those responding they did work: “You work or worked as a ...” and an alternative is “unpaid worker.”

Source: Own Construction based on IBGE and INEC data

## CONCLUSION

The inclusion or exclusion of questions that identify (implicitly or explicitly) the gender conditions of the population depend on historical, economic, political and social contexts. We argue that the inclusion of the topic does not respond to convergence mechanisms embedded in the economic or political developments in the region, which are predictable or dependent of a hypothetical historical unidirectionality. In other words, there is no a single path or convergence of development associated with the modernization of statistical systems. Moreover, they do not depend on unique forces such as the economic or political factors exclusively. Each country has its conditions and contexts that build the power to measure gender according to specific contingencies. In this sense, the social forces of each moment, geography, institutionality or condition of social participation are the aspects that allow advances or setbacks concerning the production of census statistics with a gender perspective.

This doesn't mean that it is not possible to interpret the future based on probable scenarios. For example, there are specific regularities of each country that are necessary to identify particularly related to the factors influencing the constitution of the questionnaires facing the 2020 census round. In the case of Brazil, the autonomy and size of IBGE makes the inclusion of questions more dependent on macroeconomic conditions and country policies, that is, if an economic crisis continues in the coming years, the questionnaire may experience an impact. A dissimilar case happens in Ecuador, where the structure of social activism seems to have a major influence on the construction of questions, with or without gender focus. In the latter case, factors influencing the flexibility and openness of the statistical institution are political and social, and less economic. This is the reason why we consider that, in the case of Ecuador, there are more opportunities that the census will be influenced by local feminist movements. In the Brazilian case, despite of some efforts of similar groups, the pressure from the social movements seems to concentrate in other causes. It is also important to mention that, although the region seems to live a new wave of feminism, the gender questions are still considered a "sensitive issue" in many countries. This suggests that we will continue the tradition of not having enough information concerning gender, and also that there are urgent steps to address ways to make gender a priority in the official statistical systems.

## NOTES

1. Gender in this work is understood in the binary sense, man–woman. Mostly, as the social role performed by men and women, derived of the sex (Scott, 1986).
2. Indigenous are 0.47% of the Brazilian population.
3. Studying other countries, Navarro (2012) points out the importance of feminist movements in the process of following up the time-use surveys.
4. Polity is widely scrutinized data series on political issues used by analysts and experts in academia. It monitors real-time events through assessments of the trajectories of unfolding political dynamics and their effect on the essential qualities of governing institutions, or patterns of authority. More details on Center for Systemic Space (2019).
5. It is important to emphasize that in Portuguese and Spanish, words *chefe* or *jefe* have a masculine sense, so that may lead the respondent to assume it refers to a male.

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