

A NEW SOCIAL POLICY

Informality as the norm and
formality as the exception

PROJECT INFORMALITY IN TIMES OF COVID-19

RUPTURES21
TOWARDS NEW ECONOMIES,
SOCIETIES AND LEGALITIES
THE IEL COLLECTIVE



Report 1



INFORMALITY IN COVID-19 TIMES is a project of **RUPTURES21: TOWARDS NEW ECONOMIES, SOCIETIES AND LEGALITIES** of **THE IEL COLLECTIVE**. The project explores challenges posed by the pandemic to informal workers, their families, and public policies in general. By highlighting the contributions made by the informal economy to the general economy and wellbeing, and using Colombia as a case study, the project calls for attention to be paid to the precarities that accompany informal work and how these turn into ultra-precariities in moments of crisis such as COVID-19.

This first report highlights the need for a new social policy starting from the assumption that informality is the norm and formality the exception in Colombia.

The figures in this report are from the database on the informal economy in Colombia produced by the RUPTURES21 team. Sources of information include the Large Integrated Household Survey (Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares - GEIH), including information from the regions of Amazonía and Orinoquía and additional modules related to migration and ethnic population, the Special Register of Health Service Providers (Registro Especial de Prestadores de Servicios de Salud – REPS), information from the National Institute of Health (Instituto Nacional Salud (INS)), the Integrated Social Protection Information System (Sistema Integrado de Información de la Protección Social (SISPRO)), the Single National Registry of Human Talent in Health (Registro Único Nacional del Talento Humano en Salud (ReTHUS)) and the Unique Affiliates Database (Base de Datos Única de Afiliados (BDUA)).

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Summary

In countries like Colombia – where informality is the norm – the informal economy should be understood based on its scale and heterogeneity, its interrelation with the formal economy, its great contribution to the general national economy, and in light of the many precarities which cross-cut the national labour market.

As a result, it is crucial to conceptualise, measure, and evaluate the characteristics of the informal economy, especially in moments of public health crises.

In seeking to capture the heterogeneity of informal workers, as much in terms of income as in the quality of work and the precarities which they encounter, the most adequate criterion for its measurement is the “non-enrolment and contribution to the health and pension systems”.

This criterion enables us to identify and measure the scale of informal workers beyond restricted views of the phenomenon which only look at questions of income, the economic sector, fulfilment of fiscal norms, personnel employed in companies, or the existence or not of specific judicial relationships.

The criterion of “non-enrolment and contribution to the health and pension systems” reveals that informal workers exist across the entire economy and all economic sectors. It also reveals the variety of precarities that limit their enjoyment of the right to social security, and that lead to their over-exposure to economic shocks and public health crises.

Using this criterion, the database produced as part of this project shows that 61.2% of the workers in Colombia are informal. In urban areas, this number is reduced to 54.5%, yet reaches 85.7% in rural areas.

Adding workers who only contribute to one of these systems (health or pensions), and that don't have a written employment contract, and/or that don't earn more than 95% of the hourly minimum wage, these numbers go up to an overall of 68.2%: 62.6% in urban areas and 88.8% in rural areas.

On the whole, the information provided by the database demonstrates the importance of a new social policy in Colombia, in order to take into account the characteristics of the informal economy, as much in terms of its scale and economic vitality as in terms of the precarities faced by informal (as well as many formal) workers.



New social policies to consider

- A new social policy should be constructed which would be premised on a re-evaluation of both formality and extreme poverty, as unique means of access to the social security health-care system and other social benefits and subsidies.
- The content and scope of the fundamental right to work should be considered in terms of all types of working arrangements, guaranteeing the dignified and fair working conditions enshrined in the Colombian Political Constitution. It must be recognised that informal employment is a type of work, in many cases with high intensity effort and high levels of risk.
- A fundamental element of this new social policy should be replacing the policy of targeted social spending with a system of unconditional Universal Basic Income. For informal workers, this system should be based on the contribution made by the informal economy to the general national economy in terms of fiscal contributions, wealth generation and non-remunerated care work (work which is usually carried out by women and which has increased due to measures adopted for the control of the pandemic) (Baker, 2008; Rodríguez Enríquez, 2009).
- The concept of a Complementary Social Salary, namely, a complementary income which would ensure to informal workers access to a minimum living wage, can also be considered as a useful tool in this new social policy (Hopp, 2017; Muñoz & Viilar, 2017)
- Structural reform of the pension system is needed which would reflect the contributions of informal workers to the national economy, in the same way as a Universal Basic Income. For this it would be necessary to introduce a national social protection floor to operate as a minimum social protection in light of Recommendation 202 of the International Labour Organization (ILO).
- Reforms of labour regulations are also crucial. The triangular relations model of capital, employment and State no longer reflect the labour world dynamics. Moreover, classic labour law was constructed in light of the Fordist model in which subordination and bilaterality are the central premises (Porras, 2018; Vosko, 2010). This is not relevant to most of today's workers, and as such it is necessary to recognise the new work dynamics and regulate them according to decent employment standards (Contouris, 2020).
- The social dialogue can also no longer be thought of in terms of formal workers and capital or based upon the premise that the development of the economy will lead to the formalisation

sation of the growing masses of workers. The economic crises of recent decades – which are increasingly frequent – have generated a constant growth of informality (Portes, Castells y Benton, 1989). In this context labour regulation is needed which would promote new models of social dialogue to ensure decent work standards, as well as dignified and fair working conditions (Somavía, 1999; Contouris, 2020).

- A new social policy should be accompanied by a new nation-wide comprehensive and consistent self-identification system for informal workers, in order to promote processes of association and trade unions which would enable, in turn, social dialogue in light of Recommendation 204 of the ILO.

- Existing information systems on the informal economy should be strengthened, particularly in terms of its relation to the formal sector and its contribution to the general national economy. It is crucial to understand the value chains which interconnect formality and informality, and which constitute a significant source of capital gains. More than just looking for new targeting of resources, information on informal workers should enable an understanding of their precise characteristics, in order to design public policies which would lead to the improvement of labour conditions and standards of living. The available data, as well as being extremely limited, is based on a restrictive definition of informality (Bernal, 2009;

ve definition of informality (Bernal, 2009; Porras, 2016).



1. The informal economy: its great scale and heterogeneity

Economic informality is a constant across the globe (Heintz, 2012).

Informality is usually considered in the literature as a residual part of national economies which provides work to the excesses of workforce not absorbed by the formal economy (Fields, 1975; Schneider & Enste, 2000; Gërxa-ni, 2004).

There is no consensus in the literature as to how to define informality. Traditionally it has been conceptualised using three criterion groups: the size of the company, the labour conditions, and the non-fulfilment of State regulations in areas such as taxes, licenses and lawfulness of the goods and services offered, amongst others (Heintz, 2012; García & Granda, 2019).

These traditional conceptualisations of the informal economy don't take into account on the one hand its existence as an alternative to adverse global production conditions, to deindustrialisation processes, and to the lack of formal alternatives for work, especially in countries of middle and low income (Portes, Castells y Benton, 1989), and on the other hand the large contribution made by informal workers to national wellbeing and wealth generation

(Heintz, 2012; Fernández & Villar, 2016).

Due to these factors, a single measurement formula does not exist which would enable us to determine the size of informality in a country. Different indirect estimation methods based on household surveys have been suggested to respond to this challenge, which explore the correlation between economic activity, monetary indicators and contributions to the health and pension systems.

Table 1 presents four criteria based on these estimations which measure informality with a common focus on the inability of workers to carry out paid work with an adequate level of social protection (Schneider & Enste, 2000; García & Granda, 2019).

In light of this focal point, **Table 1** offers a measurement of the informal economy using the following criteria: (1) non-contribution to the health system, (2) non-contribution to the pension system, (3) non-contribution to the health and pension system, and (4) lack of labour stability (permanency) and/or lack of minimum income and/or non-contribution to the health system and/or non-contribution to the pension system.

In our view, the non-contribution to the health and pension systems is the most adequate criterion to measure the informal economy. It addresses our concern regarding working conditions, especially the exposure to risks (for example physical and health risks, and volatility of income) and the access to protection and/or compensation mechanisms in health emergencies. The contributions to health and pension systems, in the context of the Colombian Social Security System, are that which enable access to the minimum system coverage.

Furthermore, the criterion of non-contribution to the health and pension systems addresses the ILO's principles of decent work (Somavía, 1999), and encompasses the greatest number of informal workers. This criterion nevertheless has its limitations in that it does not cover employees who, perhaps despite having a formal labour relationship, lack stability in employment or an income which ensures their and their family's subsistence minimum. The fourth (4) criterion in **Table 1** includes this group and shows how 68.2% workers in Colombia live in such conditions.

Table 1. Four conceptualisations of informality

Measurement and objective	Value/problems of the criterion	National total	Urban Total	Rural Total
<p>1) Non-contribution to the health system</p> <p>Workers not enrolled as contributor to the social security health system, whether it be the contributory, subsidised or special regime.</p>	It can cause underestimation of informal workers, given the heterogeneity of health system enrolment regimes in the country.	3,891,374 (17.3%)	3,263,138 (18.4%)	628,235 (13.0%)
<p>2) Non-contribution to the pension system</p> <p>Workers who do not contribute to the pension system.</p>	It can cause representation problems with regards to formal workers who do not contribute to pensions in a compulsory manner (e.g. pensioners, foreigners, NGO workers).	13,797,776 (61.2%)	9,660,767 (54.5%)	4,137,009 (85.7%)
<p>3) Non-contribution to the health and pension system</p> <p>Workers who do not contribute to the health and pension system.</p>	Incorporating the criterion of non-contribution to the health system and the criterion of non-contribution to the pension system eliminates the weaknesses of both.	13,805,597 (61.2%)	9,667,758 (54.5%)	4,137,839 (85.7%)

4. Lack of labour stability and/or lack of minimum income and/or non-contribution to the health system and/or non-contribution to the pension system.

Workers who do not contribute to the health and/or pension system, and/or who do not have a written work contract and/or who do not earn more than 95% of the hourly minimum wage.

Combines different criteria to measure informality and the lack of stability and minimum income, generating a measurement which includes informal workers and others in non-ideal conditions.

15,388,875
(68.2%)

11,101,724
(62.6%)

4,287,151
(88.8%)

Source: Own calculations based on GEIH 2019. This includes information from the regions of Orinoquía and Amazonía.

2. The informal economy's contribution to the general economy

The large size of the informal economy means that the national economic development dynamics in Colombia, as in similar countries, are not independent of those which occur within the informal economy.

Furthermore, there exist multiple other relations between formality and informality which prevent a clear division of the two (Heintz, 2012). Formality and informality exist in a continuum mediated by the scope of legal regulations (Guha-Khasnobis et. al., 2006), distinct income generation strategies by persons and families, and dynamics of the economic sectors, amongst other factors.

It is therefore of utmost importance to define and measure informality not only to understand its scale, but also its heterogeneity, economic vitality, internal dynamics, its relation with formality and its contribution to general national economies (Medina & Schneider, 2018; Bonnet et. al. 2019).

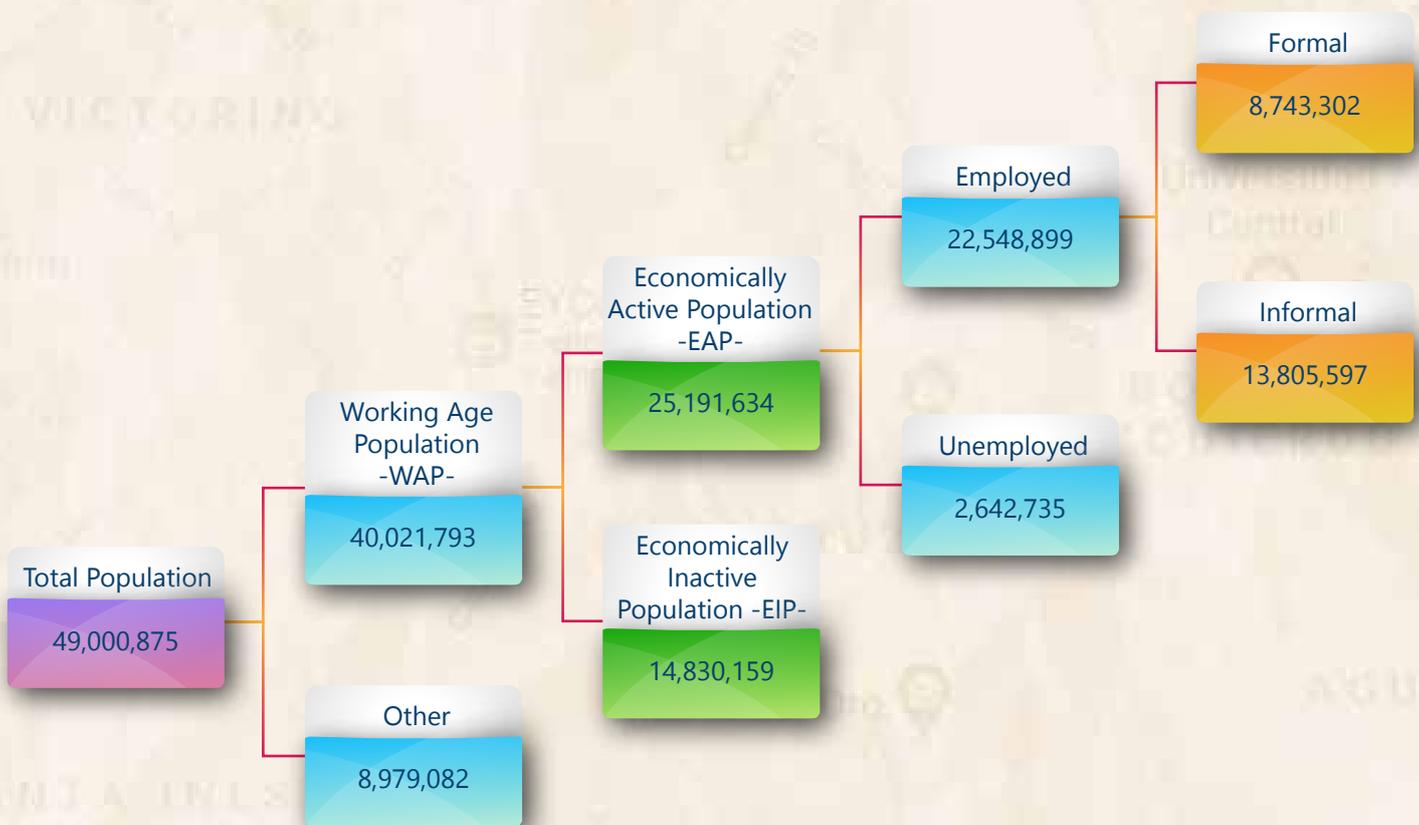
Even though informality can be associated to low productivity (in terms of GDP) and lack of protection for workers, and can therefore be considered an obstacle to economic growth, it still generates employment, alleviates the impact of economic shocks on vulnerable households (Docquier et. al., 2014) and contributes significantly to general national economies.

In Colombia, the informal economy employs the greatest part of the country's active population with approximately 44.2% (6.6 million) of a total of 15 million households depending on informality. Assuming that households in Colombia are made up of 3.2 persons, approximately 21 million persons, around 43% of the total population of the country (49 million) live off of the informal economy (see **Diagram 1**).

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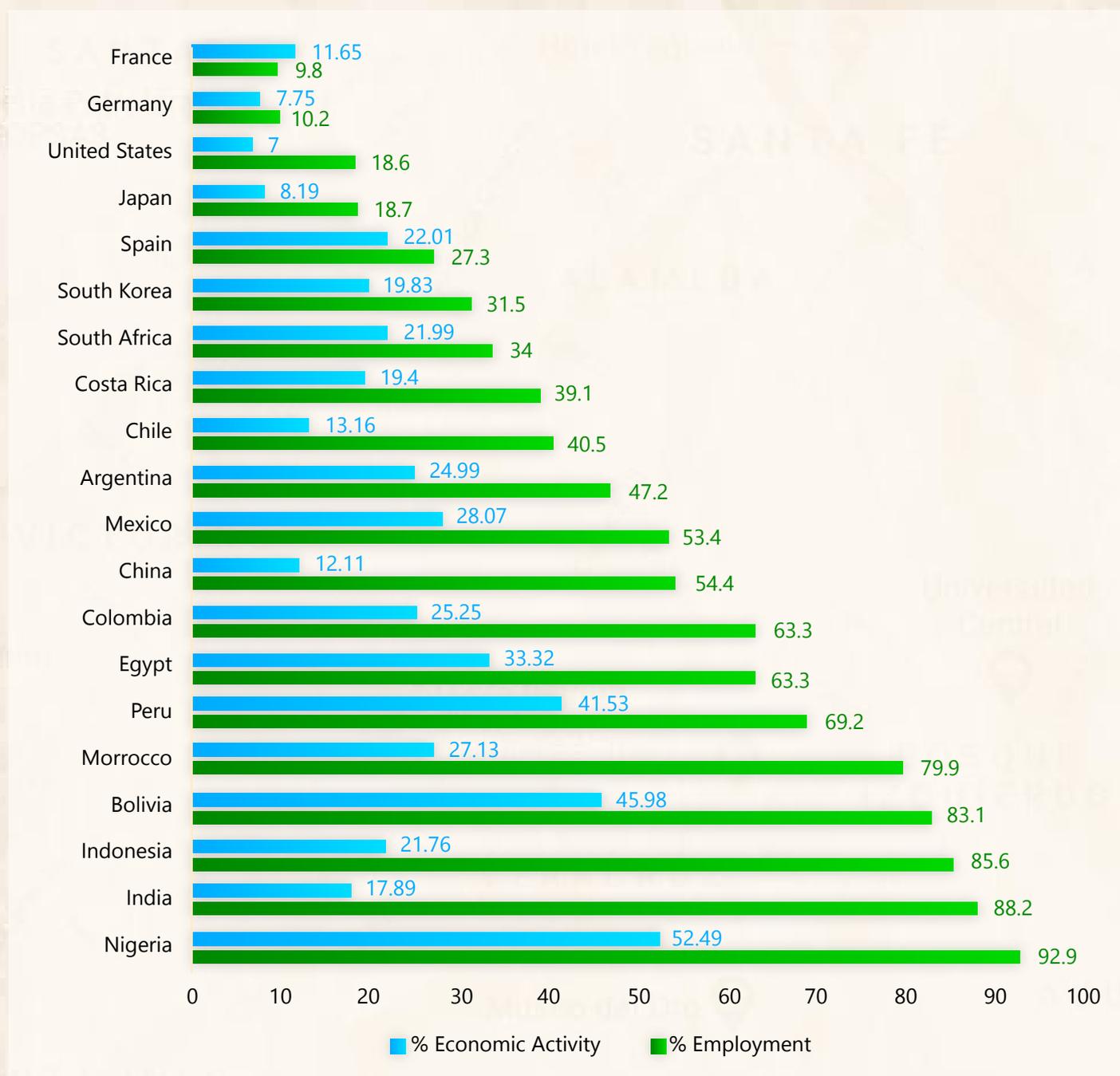
In Colombia, informal workers generate around 25.25% of the GDP according to calculations carried out by Medina and Schneider (2018) with information until 2015 (see **Graph 1**).

Diagram 1. Colombian Labour Market Structure



Source: Own production based on data from DANE-GEIH 2019. This includes information from the regions of Orinoquía and Amazonía.

Graph 1. Participation of the informal sector in employment and National GDP



Note: The percentage of informal participation in the GDP was taken from Medina and Schneider (2018), and corresponds to data until 2015. It was carried out taking into account data such as taxes, unemployment, GDP and levels of regulation, amongst others. In the case of employment, estimations are from Bonnet et. al. (2019), with varying reference years between the countries; for Colombia the calculation was based upon GEIH 2015.

3. Formality and informality: blurred boundaries

Given its large scale and heterogeneity, informality in Colombia needs to be understood in terms of its close relation with the formal economy.

While informality has traditionally been associated to vulnerability in employment, there do exist informal jobs which can generate adequate and sustainable incomes over time. Equally, formal jobs with low income and low stability levels also exist.

Furthermore, many workers constantly move between formality and informality.

The interdependence, and in many cases co-dependence and co-constitution, of formality and informality implies a natural relationship often ignored in labour markets analyses (Böhme & Thiele, 2012; Heintz, 2012; Saracoglu, 2015).

These links between formality and informality lead us to understand Colombia and other countries with high levels of informality not simply as simply dual economies, but as spaces where multiple labour and economic relationships exist, generating distinct types and levels of employment and social wellbeing.

Graph 2 schematises the different relations between formality and informality taking into account stability in employment, income, and required qualification. Of this comparison four types of employment emerge: 1) precarious employment; 2) stable low-income employment; 3) qualified short-term employment; 4) qualified stable employment.

Each employment type is associated to characteristics proper to the distinct types of work (e.g., domestic employment, public service, self-employed work – i.e. a person who carries out labour activities in their own name – and employment in private companies), such as the type of skills demanded by the work (routine, manual and/or cognitive), the level of competence (high or low), the level of education (primary, secondary, higher education), the size of the company being worked in, the level of income (below or above two minimum wages), and the existence and type of contract (fixed-term or permanent).

While the majority of informal workers in Colombia can be classified as precarious workers according to **Graph 2**, informality understood as non-contribution to the health and pension systems also permeates stable jobs of low income, short-term qualified jobs, and even the stable and qualified jobs, when

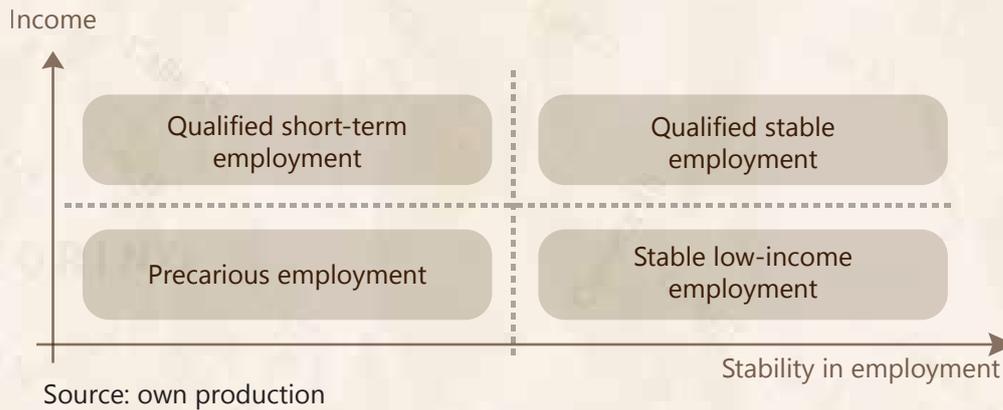
1. See Estatuto Tributario, art. 340; Decreto 1473 of 2014.

employers do not fulfil their obligation to carry out their respective contributions.

The cross-cutting nature of informality has very serious implications in terms of health and

social security protection, as well as in terms of assurances for other employment risks. In other words, it signifies a limitation in terms of social citizenship.

Graph 2. Labour market and blurred borders between formality and informality



4. Trends and distribution of informality

In the last decade, informality in Colombia has reduced from a total of 68.54% to 61.2% (13 805 597) (see **Graph 3**). This reduction is owed, amongst other factors, to the implementation of formalisation policies and incentives to contract new employees and apprentices. Nevertheless, levels of informality continue to be extremely high due to the structural challenges encountered by the country's economy and the limits of these formalisation policies. It is also expected that the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic will generate a significant

increase in the levels of informality.

In terms of the relation between formality and informality, one can find 1.6 informal workers for every single formal worker in Colombia.

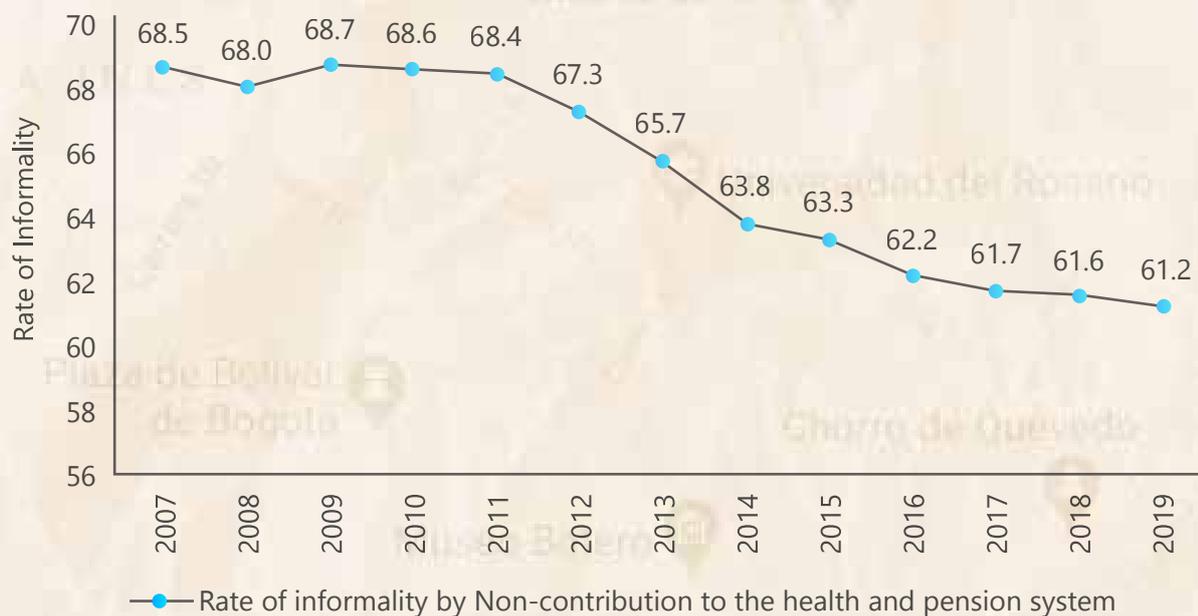
As can be observed in **Table 2**, the largest proportion of informal workers are the self-employed (86.9%), followed by domestic service workers (79.4%). These workers are especially difficult to formalise due to the nature of their occupation, incentives for fiscal evasion, the costs of access to social security, the difficulty

Table 2. Relation between formality and informality according to the occupation type

Occupation type	Informal	Formal	Formality- Informality Ratio	Total workers
Self-employed worker	8,332,717 86.93%	1,253,062 13.07%	6.65	9,585,779 100%
Labourer or private company employee	2,819,692 31.36%	6,170,546 68.64%	0.46	8,990,238 100%
Family worker without remuneration	727,915 97.12%	21,604 2.88%	33.69	749,519 100%
Day workers or unskilled labourers (peones)	663,413 86.28%	105,525 13.72%	6.29	768,938 100%
Manager or employer	598,632 72.04%	232,336 27.96%	2.58	830,968 100%
Domestic worker	550,545 79.41%	142,747 20.59%	3.86	693,293 100%
Worker without remuneration	96,232 96.31%	3,682 3.69%	26.14	99,914 100%
Other unclassified work	16,239 98%	332 2.00%	48.92	16,571 100%
Labourer or government employee	212 0.03%	813,468 99.97%	0.00	813,679 100%
Total	13,805,597 61.23%	8,743,302 38.77%	1.58	22,548,899 100

Source: own production based on data from DANE-GEIH

Graph 3. Evolution of the rate of informality in Colombia



Source: own production based on data from DANE-GEIH

of returning to State subsidy schemes when they cease to be informal, and the flexible working hours offered by informal work.

Conditions associated to gender also influence the level of participation in informality in a decisive manner. In Colombia 58.6% of informal workers are men and 41.4% are women, which signifies that for each informal female worker there are 1.4 informal male workers (see **Table 3**).

The lower participation of women in the informal economy is related to their higher levels of inactivity, their lower rates of occupation and their higher rates of unemployment (Lasso, 2013). Structural conditions associated to the sexual division of labour mean that women are excluded from the labour market, and that their access to it, when it exists, occurs through informality. Some of these conditions include caring responsibilities, pregnancy, maternity, and the lack of childcare services (Arango & Posada, 2007; Olarte & Peña, 2010;

Ramírez-Bustamante, 2019; Porras-Santillana & Rodríguez-Morales, 2019). According to DANE (2020), in June 2020 more than 11 million of a total of 17 334 000 inactive persons were women, whereas the rate of female unemployment was 26.2% and that of men 16.2%.

The sectors with highest levels of informality are, in first place, the agriculture, livestock, hunting, forestry, and fishing sectors, with a rate of 23%, meaning that for each formal worker, there exist 7.8 informal workers. In second place are the wholesale and retail commerce, and motor vehicle and motorcycle repair sectors, with a rate of informality of 21.7%, followed by the accommodation and food services sector with a rate of 9.7% of informality (see **Table 4**). These numbers reflect the particularities of these economic sectors which, for example, allow for flexible working hours, to obtain some form of income (especially for workers who were not absorbed by the formal labour market for long periods of time), combined with the ease of evading fiscal

Table 3. Relation between formality and informality according to gender

Sex	Informal Workers	Formal Workers	Ratio Formality- Informality	Total workers
Women	5,708,777 41.35%	3,639,503 41.63%	1.57	9,348,279 100%
Men	8,096,820 58.65%	5,103,799 58.37%	1.59	13,200,619 100%
Total	13,805,597 100%	8,743,302 100%	1.58	22,548,899 100%

Source: own production based on data from DANE-GEIH

charges, and the possibility of developing activities in an independent and temporary manner (e.g. in harvest seasons).

At the regional level, the Colombian labour market does not show great differences. Analysing the rates of informality at the departmental level, it is clear that those with highest rates

are Guajira, Córdoba, Sucre, Nariño and Cauca with 84.2%, 82.7%, 83.0%, 82.0% and 79.9%, respectively. On the other hand, those that have the lowest rates are Bogotá, Antioquia, Vaupés, Caldas, Cundinamarca, and Risaralda with 41.2%, 50.8%, 50.9%, 55.1%, 55.7% and 58.8%, respectively.

Table 4. Relation between formality and informality in branches of economic activity

Branches of economic activity	Informality	Formality	Formality-Informality Ratio	Total workers
Section A – Agriculture, Livestock, Hunting, Forestry and Fishing	3,180,881 23.04%	405,828 4.64%	7.84	3,586,709 15.91%
Section B – Mining and Quarrying	100,607 0.73%	107,168 1.23%	0.94	207,776 0.92%
Section C – Manufacturing Industries	1,363,914 9.88%	1,205,759 13.79%	1.13	2,569,673 11.4%
Section D – Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	3,996 0.03%	68,048 0.78%	0.06	72,044 0.32%
Section E – Water supply, Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	40,269 0.29%	88,447 1.01%	0.46	128,716 0.57%
Section F – Construction	969,337 7.02%	552,002 6.31%	1.76	1,521,338 6.75%
Section G – Wholesale and retail trade, motor vehicle and motorcycle repair	3,001,190 21.74%	1,290,981 14.77%	2.32	4,292,171 19.04%
Section H – Transport and Storage	960,524 6.96%	606,032 6.93%	1.58	1,566,557 6.95%
Section I – Accommodation and Food Services	1,348,516 9.77%	310,914 3.56%	4.34	1,659,429 7.36%
Section J – Information and Communication	105,764 0.77%	222,484 2.54%	0.48	328,248 1.46%

Table 4. Relation between formality and informality in branches of economic activity

Section K – Financial and Insurance Activities	42,201 0.31%	277,310 3.17%	0.15	319,511 1.42%
Section L – Real Estate Activities	50,491 0.37%	234,878 2.69%	0.21	285,369 1.27%
Section M – Professional, Scientific, and Technical Activities	206,071 1.49%	381,790 4.37%	0.54	587,860 2.61%
Section N – Administrative and Support Service Activities	449,488 3.26%	365,768 4.18%	1.23	815,256 3.62%
Section O – Public and Defence Administration; Compulsory Social Security	13,136 0.1%	640,660 7.33%	0.02	653,796 2.9%
Section P – Education	161,600 1.17%	788,418 9.02%	0.20	950,018 4.21%
Section Q – Human Health and Social Work Activities	189,539 1.37%	729,792 8.35%	0.26	919,331 4.08%
Section R – Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Activities	187,568 1.36%	128,269 1.47%	1.46	315,836 1.4%
Section S – Other Service Activities	847,325 6.14%	187,284 2.14%	4.52	1,034,609 4.59%
Section T – Individual Households as employers; Individual Households as Non-Differentiated Producers of Goods and Services for Private Use	582,251 4.22%	147,931 1.69%	3.94	730,181 3.24%
Section U – Extraterritorial Organisation and Entity Activities	658 0,00%	3,024 0.03%	0.22	3,682 0.02%
Total	13,805,325 100%	8,742,785 100%	1.58	22,548,110 100%

Source: own production based on data from DANE-GEIH 2019.

Note: the economic activity branches are given by the CIU rev4.

The strong differences at a departmental level imply possible patterns of regional specialisation (for example, Bogotá specialises in financial activities whereas Atlántico specialises in

hospitality and tourism) and are associated to local characteristics such as the educational levels of workers, levels of economic growth of certain sectors (for example, commerce and/or

financial activities vs construction and/or mining), and conditions of population life quality (for example, according to DANE for 2018, the Central region presents high levels of satisfaction of basic needs, whereas the Pacífico region presents the lowest levels). **Map 1** illustrates some of these regional differences and shows, in general terms, the existence of a correlation between high levels of informality, low levels of income, and low educational levels in the active population.

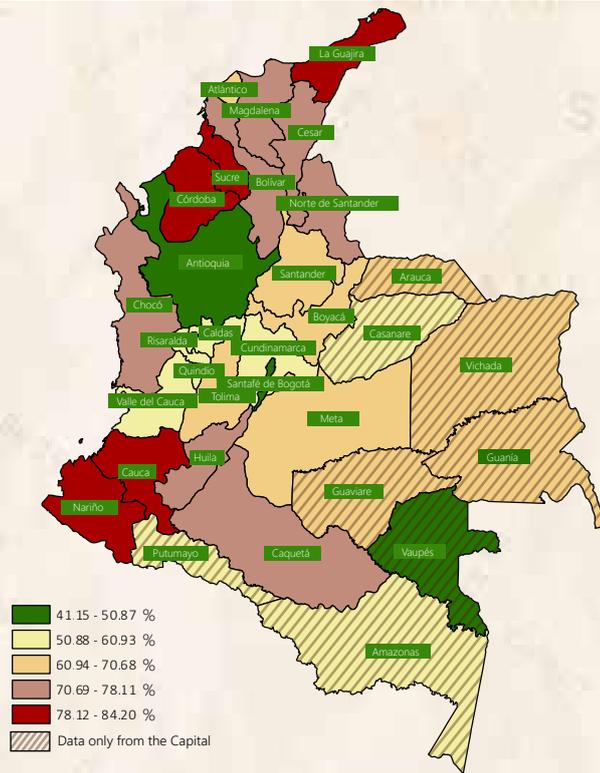
It is important to highlight that in the case of departments in the eastern zone and the Colombian Amazon, as in other regions with indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations, this data only takes into account the conventional economy, leaving aside the traditional economies included in neither the formal nor the informal economy classification. Additionally, for the specific cases of the departments of Amazonas, Arauca, Casanare, Guainía, Guaviare, Putumayo, Vaupés, and Vichada the data only recognises information on their capitals.

These capitals represent the urban sectors of their departments, which are mostly rural and covered by rainforest, and their numbers should therefore be understood in light of their reduced active population, which tend to have relatively lower levels of informality and higher levels of education, due to their location in the capitals and their employment usually in the official (and other similar) sectors. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily involve higher income. For example, according to the existing data on its capital Leticia, the department of Amazonas has a low rate of informality, a high proportion of workers with higher education, but a lower average income in comparison with other departments.

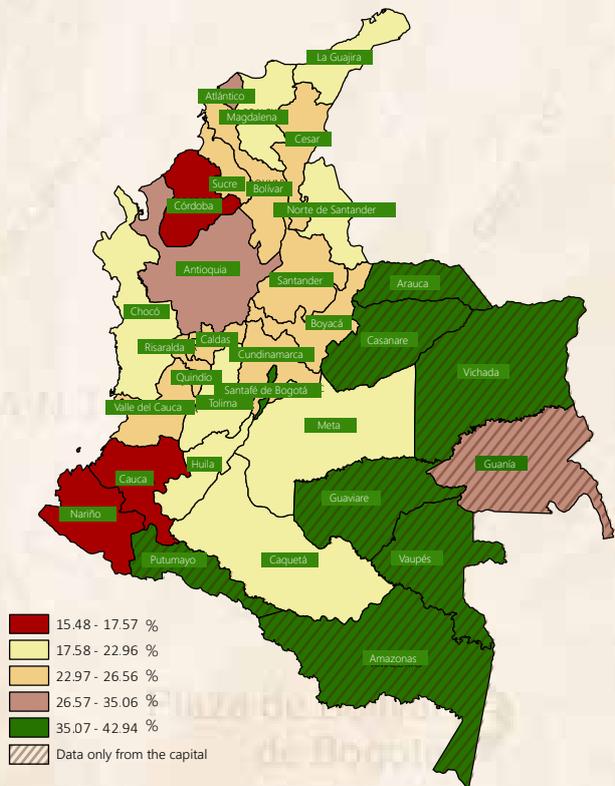
The specific characteristics of each region therefore pose a challenge to the standardised approaches to formalisation. Some of these policies are found to be associated to the reduction of taxes, the simplification of procedures, and the flexibilization of regulations.

Map 1. Rate of informality, workers with higher education, average labour income

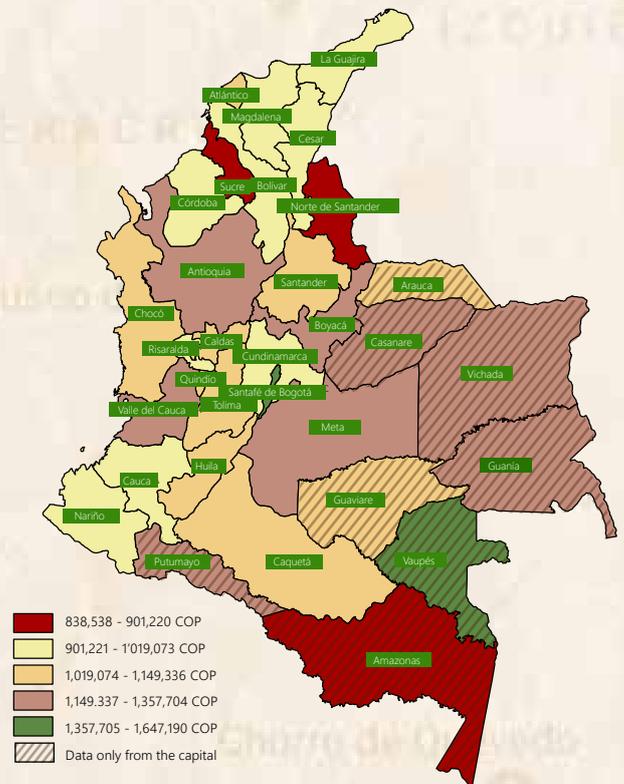
1. Rate of Informality



2. Workers with Higher Education



3. Average Income



Source: Own production based on data from DANE-GEIH 2019.

Ruptures21: Towards New Economies, Societies and Legalities: Ruptures21 responds to the challenges posed by old and current economic, social, and legal dynamics and their impact on the human and non-human world. Through international interdisciplinary and institutional collaborations, Ruptures21 advances novel ways to understand and address global issues. The ruptures which we see today at the international level require a break from set approaches and new ways of acting and being. Ruptures21 is an initiative of The IEL Collective.

Informality in Times of Covid-19: The Ruptures21 project “Informality in Times of Covid-19” brings together socio-legal academics, labour economists, public health experts, anthropologists, cinematographers, graphic designers, web-designers and public policy makers in order to study the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on informal workers and their economies, using Colombia as its main case study. Mixing different means of communication and blurring the boundaries between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and between practice and academia, outcomes of this project include multilingual reports, life histories, documentaries, online outreach platforms and interventions, and the first comprehensive aggregated database on informality in Colombia. Highlighting both the large yet often forgotten contribution of informal workers to general national economies, as well as the ultra-precarities they face in moments of public health crises, the outcomes of this project make an urgent call for a new set of new social, economic, and health policies in Colombia and similar countries.

Informality in Times of Covid-19 is supported by the University of Kent, the University of Essex, the University of Warwick, and Rosario University. It has been conducted in alliance with the Observatory for Women’s Equity (ICESI University, Colombia), the Labour Observatory of Rosario University (Observatorio Laboral de la Universidad del Rosario (LaboUR)), the Research Group on Public Health and Epidemiology (Rosario University) and AlianzaEFI.

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