

UNLOCKING ECONOMIC MOBILITY:

Smartphone Finance and the Rise of Mexico's Working Mother Micro-Entrepreneurs

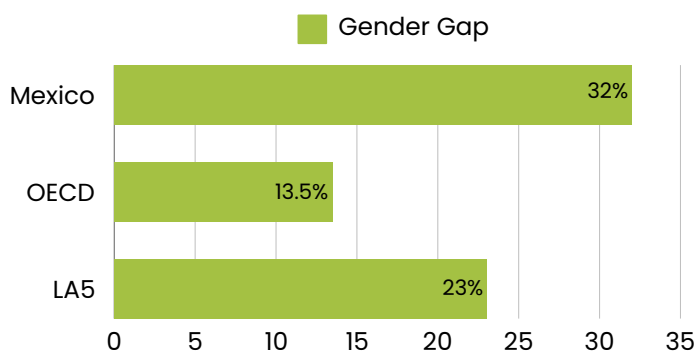


Informal employment provides flexibility, but for women in the lowest economic strata, access to digital financial tools is essential to unlock these opportunities. 92% of PayJoy's customers report that smartphone financing enabled them to maintain their current jobs or businesses.

I. Setting the Context: Mexico's Working Mothers

Mexico's workforce is increasingly shaped by working mothers balancing caregiving responsibilities, household duties, and employment to supplement family income. Many of these women participate in the informal economy, taking on multiple jobs and becoming micro-entrepreneurs in pursuit of better economic futures for themselves and their families.

As of 2023, 70% of working women in Mexico are mothers, representing approximately 17 million women who have at least one child and also work (Mexico News Daily). Despite their growing participation in the labor force — from 2005 to 2023, women's participation increased from 41% to 46%—it will take 119 years to reach parity with men (IMCO). Mexico's gender gap is 32%, far exceeding the OECD average of 13.5% and the LA5 average of 23% (IMF, 2023).

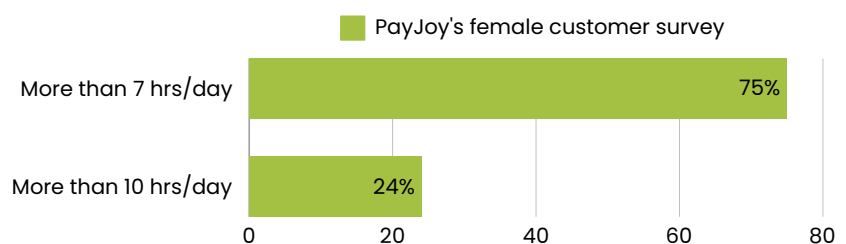


Many working mothers opt for flexible work arrangements by participating in the informal economy, which allows them to juggle family obligations while generating income. These women are the definition of micro-entrepreneurship: juggling multiple work responsibilities, caregiving, and motherhood to meet their families' needs. 46% of PayJoy's customers in Mexico are women, and 75% of these women have at least one child who is currently under the age of 18.

II. Informal Work & Micro-Entrepreneurship: A Balancing Act

The informal economy offers working mothers an empowering pathway to manage both income generation and caregiving responsibilities. For many, this flexibility is essential: **65% of PayJoy's customers work in the informal economy, taking on roles such as street vending and house cleaning.** Women in these roles often work long hours—75% of PayJoy's female customers surveyed reported that they work more than seven hours daily, and 24% work more than ten hours per day. Seeing informal work through the lens of micro-entrepreneurship is an important perception shift to understand how working mothers in Mexico often need to juggle multiple non-full-time work arrangements. Working mothers often need to find work that allows them to contribute from home to manage household duties or coordinate childcare while working outside the home. This dynamic makes their work entrepreneurial in nature, as they must creatively solve problems, adjust plans quickly, and balance multiple roles to generate income.

Greater financial inclusion and access to tools like smartphone finance provide crucial entry points into the financial system for working mothers. With a smartphone, working mothers in Mexico can do much more. They use smartphones to communicate with their customers, access online services such as mobile payments, participate in digital platform gig work opportunities and such. **Nearly 3 in 4 PayJoy female customers who work say that their phones are extremely important to them.**



III. Smartphone Finance: The First Seed for Growth

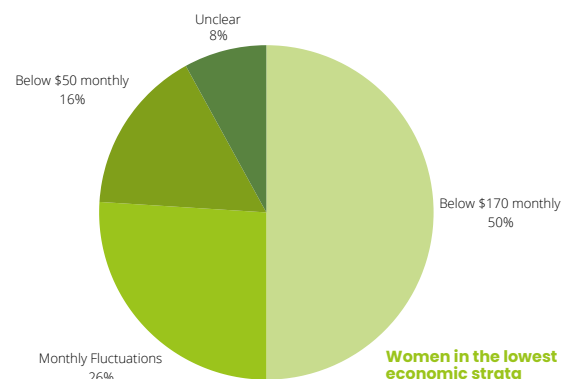


Smartphones are indispensable tools for working mothers, providing the flexibility to manage care-giving and earn income. Many working mothers juggle household duties, childcare, and informal employment to supplement their family’s income. Smartphone financing enables them to take on work both inside and outside the home, providing the freedom to adjust their schedules as needed. **PayJoy data highlights that 95% of mothers working outside the home say owning a smartphone allows them to do so, while 94% of mothers working from home report that smartphones help them manage remote work.**

Supporting Women in the Lowest Income Strata

Informal employment provides flexibility, but for women in the lowest economic strata, access to digital financial tools is essential to unlock these opportunities. One-third of PayJoy’s working mother customers own their first smartphone through PayJoy. The phone becomes a form of digital collateral. **This is particularly significant, as 26% of these women report having no stable monthly income, while 50% live near or below the poverty line (170 USD per month). Additionally, 16% live in extreme poverty, with household incomes of 50 USD or less per month.** Without access to smartphone financing, it would be even harder for many of these women to pursue economic opportunities, making the smartphone a lifeline to work and a gateway to generate supplemental income.

Smartphones help open the door for digital employment, enabling mothers to engage in gig work, online and community sales, and other micro-business ventures. This flexibility supports working mothers in maintaining economic stability while managing care-giving responsibilities.



The Role of Credit in Building Confidence

Smartphone financing is often a woman's first step into the formal financial system, creating opportunities to build financial awareness and develop confidence. These devices empower women to participate in the digital economy.

Expanding access to smartphone financing enhances economic participation, providing communication tools, job opportunities, and the ability to engage with online platforms for remote work or freelance gigs. Smartphones enable these women to build credit histories using the phone as digital collateral.

A 2021 report by the Cherie Blair Foundation analyzed online survey data from female entrepreneurs in 42 low- and middle-income countries. It highlighted how social expectations about women's roles shape their entrepreneurial journeys. These norms influence how women perceive opportunities, access resources, and pursue their aspirations. Overcoming these barriers requires addressing both structural inequalities and perception challenges. Smartphone finance provides a first step into the financial system, allowing women to build financial awareness, develop confidence, and explore new possibilities.



IV. Invisible Labor & Social Norms

Invisible labor, such as unpaid caregiving and domestic work, plays a critical yet often unrecognized role in supporting Mexico's economy. Women perform 40 hours per week on unpaid household and caregiving tasks, while men spend just 16 hours ([IMCO](#)). Furthermore, 17.2 million women exclusively engage in household tasks, in contrast to nine hundred ninety-two thousand men who exclusively perform these tasks ([IMCO](#)). One-third of women aged 25-49 list unpaid caregiving as their primary role, compared to less than 1% of men ([Milken](#)). Despite women's disproportionate contributions, this labor is not fully reflected in traditional economic frameworks or compensated through social protections.

According to ([IMCO](#)), domestic work contributes 23% to Mexico's GDP, with women responsible for 17% of this share. The International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) emphasizes that safeguarding the rights of domestic workers is crucial not only for their own well-being but also for advancing gender equality. Many mothers are expected to handle not only caregiving and household management but also income generation, further intensifying the pressure they face. These deeply rooted social norms limit women's access to stable employment, as many must adjust their schedules to attend school events and other caregiving responsibilities because mothers are expected to be present.

Smartphone finance helps women juggle caregiving duties, flexible work arrangements, and supplemental income streams. **92% of PayJoy's customers report that smartphone financing enables them to maintain their current job or business**, and 90% say access to smartphone financing makes them feel more financially secure. Transparent and accessible financial services reduce the fear of credit and empower women to explore new economic opportunities with greater confidence.

90%

90% of working moms surveyed reported that smartphone financing makes them feel more financially secure

95%

95% of working moms surveyed reported that their phones allow them to balance work and home responsibilities

92%

92% of working moms surveyed reported that smartphone finance enables them to maintain their current jobs or businesses

V. Supporting Working Mothers through Smartphone Finance



Smartphone finance offers working mothers the tools they need to manage both professional and domestic responsibilities effectively. The flexibility of these phones allows women to engage in gig work, stay connected with customers, and access online platforms, all while balancing their caregiving responsibilities.

The ability to build a credit history through smartphone financing represents more than just access to credit – it offers the confidence to engage with financial systems, fostering independence and security. Out of PayJoy's female customers surveyed, 67% are working mothers and **more than half (55%) report that their income increased because they now own a smartphone.**

"At PayJoy, our goal is to give people the power to make their own financial decisions, helping them gain control over their futures through credit access. In Mexico, we are witnessing the impact of smartphone finance for working mothers. In every market PayJoy serves, we remove gender as a consideration when we evaluate creditworthiness—it's our commitment to supporting women who are often overlooked by traditional financial services. We are seeing positive results as more women join PayJoy. We believe that real impact comes from offering everyone the chance to access tools that can make a meaningful difference in their lives."

—Priscila Barrantes, Country Manager, PayJoy Mexico



PayJoy's smartphone finance is an essential enabler—95% of mothers report that their phone allows them to balance work and home responsibilities, underscoring how smartphone finance supports micro-entrepreneurship and economic mobility. This ability to combine work and family duties is essential to working mothers: 96% say both caregiving and the ability to work are equally important to them.

VI. Conclusion: Supporting Working Mothers & Micro-Entrepreneurs for a Resilient Economy in Mexico

Achieving sustainable progress requires supporting working mothers and micro-entrepreneurs by recognizing the importance of both their paid and invisible labor. Women are now key participants in Mexico's labor force, yet they remain bound by deeply ingrained social norms that restrict their economic potential. Acknowledging these contributions—both in formal and informal sectors—is essential for understanding the challenges working mothers in Mexico face and how helping them succeed can lead to a more inclusive and resilient economy.




Smartphone finance provides a critical entry point for working mothers, helping them build financial awareness, engage with formal financial systems, and unlock new economic opportunities. By equipping these women with accessible financial tools, Mexico can promote greater gender parity and economic mobility, ensuring that women’s contributions are fully recognized and supported in their entrepreneurial and caregiving roles.

● About PayJoy

PayJoy is a mission-first financial service provider dedicated to helping underserved customers in emerging markets achieve financial stability and success. We lend through our patented technology that turns a smartphone into digital collateral, and our cutting-edge machine learning, data science, and anti-fraud AI allow us to offer the lowest cost and qualify the most customers in the industry.

References and Sources:

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- IMF: [Gender Participation Gaps, Fiscal Policies, and Legal Impediments to Women Empowerment: A Deep Dive on Gender Issues in Mexico](#)
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- Cherie Blair foundation: [Gender Stereotypes and their Impact on Women Entrepreneurs \(2021\)](#)



Survey methodology:

This survey included 1,146 working mothers who owned a PayJoy-financed smartphone. All respondents were Mexico-based PayJoy users at the time of the survey in October 2024. Participation was entirely voluntary, with personal data collected on an opt-in basis while ensuring data privacy.