


A portrait of the female labor market in Tocantins between 2000 and 2021

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of women's participation in the labor market is a reality in Brazil, especially after the 80s. With the advent of labor rights aimed at women's needs, such as maternity leave and special conditions and hours for breastfeeding women, and the improvement of professional qualification and educational levels; Women were able to expand their participation in the labor market. However, this higher participation is still not enough to overcome the structural disparities between the genders in the labor market. This work has as its object of analysis the state of Tocantins and as a time frame the period between 2000 and 2021, and the results show that this insertion of women still perpetuates inequalities between genders, as it occurs even in greater proportion in sectors of greater vulnerability and lower average income – commerce and services –, and also that women are concentrated in the lower average income strata, up to 3 minimum wages.

Keywords: Tocantins, Labor market, Feminine, Productive sectors and middle income stratum.

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INTRODUCTION

The insertion of women into the labour market has been marked by continuous progress, but also by persistent challenges. Female participation has been growing gradually, especially since the 1980s, as a result of social, economic and legal transformations. Women began to enter different sectors of the economy, occupying areas traditionally associated with female work, such as education and health, to segments that were previously predominantly male, such as technology and engineering. In addition, female schooling increased substantially, allowing women to qualify better and compete more equitably in the labor market.

However, this insertion still faces several difficulties. Wage inequality is one of the main barriers, as women continue to be paid, on average, less than men, even when they hold similar positions. In addition, cultural barriers and gender stereotypes limit women's access to leadership positions and areas with greater prestige and responsibility. Another significant difficulty is the overload of the "double shift", in which many women have to reconcile professional responsibilities with the care of the home and family, which often affects the development of their careers.

In addition, women face discrimination in the workplace, especially in hiring processes, promotion, and policies related to maternity. Even with the advances, there are still obstacles that hinder full equality of opportunities in the labor market.

In view of the problem exposed, this article will discuss an analysis of the labor market in the state of Tocantins with a focus on the composition of this market between genders and at the sectoral level, this will be carried out in a time frame between 2000 and 2021. This period was thus defined to observe the post-2000s dynamics, which represents a milestone in the country's economic and political history and inaugurates a cycle of social public policies aimed at combating hunger, income transfer, and formalizing the labor market.

Therefore, the text is divided into three sections, in addition to this brief introduction, in the first a bibliographic review of the main texts and scientific contributions on the subject is made, then the data are analyzed with regard to the object of analysis and respecting the proposed time frame and finally, we present the main conclusions of the research.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The participation of women in the Brazilian labor market and the historical trajectory of this phenomenon have been discussed by several scholars (RIOS-NETO and WAJNMAN, 1997; HIRATA, 1998; BRUSHINI, 2007; GARCIA and CONFORTO, 2012). Several studies indicate that the rate of female participation in the labor market increased significantly after the 1980s (WAJNMAN and PERPÉTUO, 1997; CARVALHO and VIEGO, 2023).



Among the factors that underpin this phenomenon, we can mention technological and cultural advances, the incorporation of labor rights aimed at women, such as maternity leave and adapted working hours for breastfeeding women, and economic and social changes in family patterns, especially those of workers.

The legal support provided an irreversible and constantly growing insertion of women in the Brazilian labor market, especially in the category of salaried workers (LAVINAS and BARSTED, 2016). In addition, as pointed out by Scorzafave and Menezes-Filho (2001), this entry of women into the market was driven not only by favorable legislation, but also by the improvement in professional qualification and by the change in attitude of women themselves, who began to face the challenges of the market with more assertiveness and determination.

Furthermore, as Assis (2009) points out, the growing entry of women into the labor market can be observed from the need to contribute to the family income and due to the search for financial independence. Bruschini and Lombardi (2003) point out that in addition to contributing to the family income, women have entered the labor market, the demographic, cultural and social transformations of families have opened space for this movement, the social role of women, the growing number of families headed by women and the reduction in the number of children, for example, These are factors that have contributed to this growing movement of women's participation in the labor market.

Based on data from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), in addition to the growth in the presence of women in the labor market, structural changes can also be observed, such as the redistribution of women among different productive sectors (LAVINAS, 1997) and the age variation of female workers (WAJNMAN and PERPÉTUO, 1997).

In the post-2000 period, the growth of female participation in the labor market was not as pronounced as in the 1980s and 1990s. Even so, there is a continuous advance in the presence of women in the market. According to data from RAIS (Annual Report of Social Information) and CAGED (General Register of Employed and Unemployed Persons), between 2003 and 2018, women's participation in formal employment increased by four percentage points, from 40% to 44% in Brazil.

Although with varying magnitudes and rhythms, the trend of increasing female participation in the labor market is observed in other Latin American countries (ILO, 2012; 2016). In Brazil, several studies point to an improvement in the disparities in participation between men and women in the labor market (DE PAULA LEITE, 2017; MATEI and DA CUNHA, 2020; CARVALHO and VIEGO, 2023). However, despite this improvement, structural segregation still persists in the productive sectors. Women, for the most part, continue to occupy jobs in sectors that require less education, have low productivity and, consequently, offer a lower average income (ASLAN SOUEN, 2012; ALVES, 2015).



According to Bruschini (2007) and Vieceli (2015), even with the entry of women into the labor market from the 1970s onwards and the increase in their participation in the occupational structure, gender disparities remain in certain productive sectors. This shows that, despite the advances, women still face significant barriers in terms of opportunities and quality of the jobs they occupy.

According to the results pointed out by Carvalho and Viego (2023) in an analysis applied to Brazil, women have entered the labor market, but still in sectors with lower average remuneration and that require less qualification. Leadership positions and those with higher salaries are still predominantly occupied by men. Cruz et al (2013), using the probit econometric method, pointed out that education levels influence women's decision to enter the labor market. According to the results pointed out by the authors, women with higher education are 30% more likely to be part of the labor market, and those with high school education 14.75%, with illiterate women as a reference.

Having this theoretical context and based on the results of the aforementioned research, this research is based on the analysis of the insertion of women in the labor market in Tocantins. The labor market in the state of Tocantins reflects both structural characteristics of the local economy and challenges common to many regions of Brazil, particularly in relation to gender disparities and macrosectoral evolution.

Gender disparities in Tocantins are evident in several indicators, such as participation rate, income, and insertion in different economic sectors. Women face significant obstacles in terms of accessing and remaining in the labour market, often focusing on lower-paid occupations and specific sectors such as services and public administration.

In addition, as pointed out by Da Silva et al (2013), the participation of women in the informal sector in the state of Tocantins is considerable, based on the results of the sample survey presented by the authors, 51.4% of women between 30 and 40 years old worked informally in 2012 in the state.

In this sense, this article will continue to analyze the structure of the labor market in Tocantins, based on the distribution of formal employment among genders at the sectoral level, according to the methodology described below.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the methodology used to carry out the research is presented, based on a quantitative approach with the application of descriptive statistics. The study aims to analyze patterns and trends in a set of data collected in a database referring to the formal labor market in Brazil. From the information obtained, descriptive techniques will be used, such as calculation of percentage participation and frequency distribution, in order to summarize and interpret the results objectively. This methodology will allow a precise and clear analysis of the phenomena about the structure of the



labor market in Tocantins and will allow us to understand how women are inserted in the local market.

The data worked in this research were extracted from the database of the Annual Report of Social Information (RAIS), which is an instrument for collecting labor data, of government management and aims to meet the needs of control of formal labor activity in Brazil. This database also contains the number of jobs occupied at each sectoral level for different geographic areas, including the North region and the state of Tocantins, in which it is the object of analysis in this work.

With this data segregation, it will be possible to obtain sectoral jobs distributed by gender. That is, the number of workers in each sector, both male and female, in the state of Tocantins can be extracted.

Some clarifications are necessary about the source of information to be used in this study. First, RAIS presents information on jobs and income of salaried workers with a formal employment relationship. Therefore, it is noteworthy that the data do not allow conclusions about total employment, only those who are formally linked (either with a formal contract following the CLT regime or public servants). Therefore, the data used omits entrepreneurs, traders, self-employed and employers in general.

The layout of the database and the information made available allow for levels of disaggregation, whether by gender, age group, region or sector of activity (according to the National Classification of Economic Activities – CNAE).

In addition to RAIS, another relevant source of data on the labor market in Brazil is PNAD. This last source of data has the advantage of recording the entire labor market, according to the occupational category (employer, self-employed, salaried) and according to the degree of formalization (CLT, temporary, loose, etc.). However, it has some limitations that prevent its use in analyses with medium- and long-term historical series, such as the one carried out in this study. In addition, in Brazil, there were two versions of the PNAD: one, closed in 2016 (with publication referring to the 2015 information), whose data were published annually; and another, the Continuous PNAD, in force since 2012, when it underwent changes in its methodology, starting to be published quarterly.

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the Continuous PNAD methodology provides more comprehensive territorial coverage and provides quarterly conjunctural information about the labor market at the national level. The two surveys are not fully comparable, as they are based on different samples/data collection and methodologies. Thus, the analysis based on the PNAD must necessarily end in 2015 or start in 2012, limiting the medium-term analysis, such as the one carried out in this article.



On the other hand, it is true that the data covered by RAIS reflect only a fraction of the labour market and, therefore, of employment, but even so, a part of vulnerable employment (casual workers, temporary workers or those with a fixed-term contract) is captured by this source of information. To compensate for the lack of data on informality, when there are substantial changes in the structure of female employment in a sector, we can also analyze the contract with the employer, distinguishing between indefinite contracts in the private sector, employment in the effective public sector (statutory), or temporary and casual workers, urban or rural (CLT), fixed-term or temporary contracts in the private sector.

In addition, the data presented in RAIS concentrate employment in a more stable way, allowing for long-term analyses, as is the case of the research presented in this article, and this allows for the evaluation of more permanent changes in the labor market. On the other hand, a punctual database would allow us to infer only about conjunctural changes, limiting the conclusions to a broad time horizon.

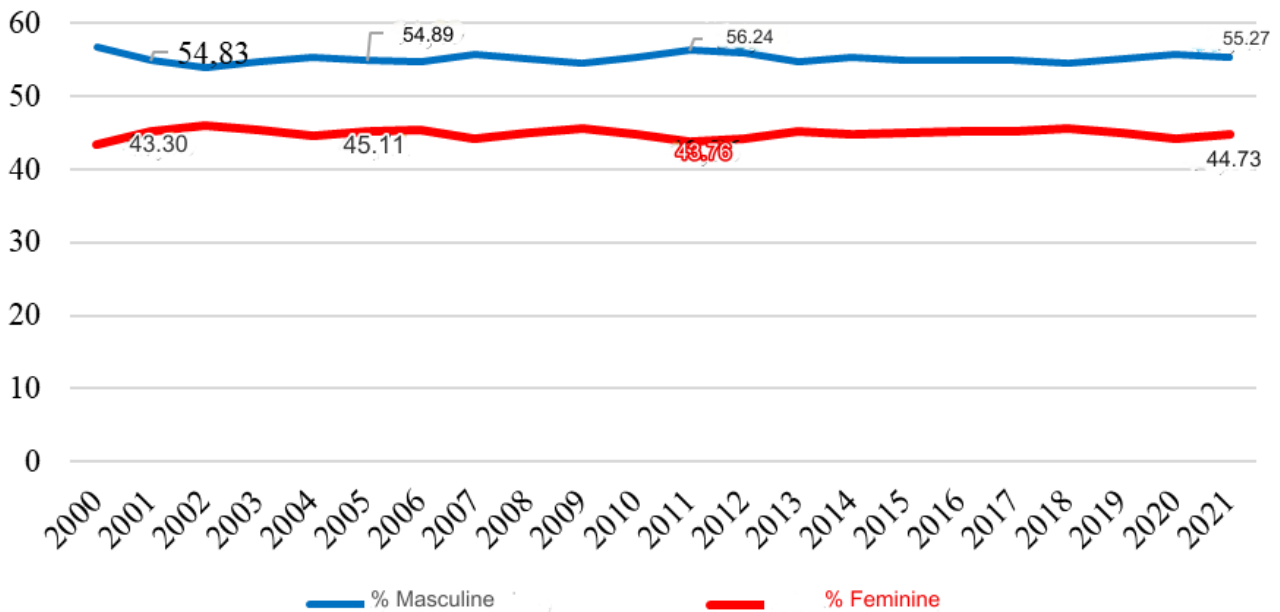
Therefore, the sectoral cut that is intended to be used in this research is that of major economic sectors according to the IBGE. Therefore, the cut is based on the five major sectors: Industry, Civil Construction, Commerce, Services and Agriculture.

The numbers of formal jobs for each of these five major economic sectors, segmented between the female and male genders, for the period between 2000 and 2021, will be extracted from RAIS, allowing inferences to be made about the structure of the labor market in the state of Tocantins.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The female participation rate is lower than that of men, reflecting both cultural barriers and domestic responsibilities disproportionately attributed to women, as can be seen from the data in Figure 1. In addition, the unemployment rate is often higher among women, who also tend to face greater difficulties in finding formal jobs.

Figure 1 – Composition of the formal labor market between genders in the state of Tocantins between 2000 and 2021



Prepared by the authors based on data extracted from CAGED/RAIS.

The massive insertion of women in the labor market throughout the 80s and 90s seems to have been stopped, and this is observed both at the national level (CARVALHO and VIEGO, 2023) and regionally from the analysis applied to the state of Tocantins. However, even if timid, it is still observed that female participation throughout the analyzed period has been persistent and positive. But these data alone are insufficient to conclude about equality and equity in working conditions between genders. And the persistence of disparities in working conditions is portrayed in several works applied at the national level, as mentioned earlier.

In addition to this stagnation observed in the participation of women in the formal labor market in Tocantins, it is observed that the disparity in earnings between genders is something that still affects women. Women in Tocantins, as in other parts of Brazil, earn less than men, even when they perform similar functions. This difference in income is the result of wage discrimination, occupational segregation, and less access to leadership positions.

The productive structure of Tocantins is mainly composed of the agricultural, industrial and service sectors, each with distinct characteristics and dynamics.

Traditionally, the agricultural sector is one of the main sources of employment in the state. The expansion of agriculture and livestock has been significant, especially with the growth of grain and meat production. However, this sector is still marked by informal and seasonal jobs, with low access to labor rights. Women are underrepresented and often limited to support roles or unpaid family work.

The industrial sector in Tocantins is less developed compared to agriculture and services. The manufacturing industry, especially that linked to agribusiness (such as food processing), is one of the

main activities. Women's participation in industry is lower than in services, and when present, it tends to be in less qualified functions with lower salaries.

The service sector is the one that employs the most in the state, reflecting a national trend. The growth of the service sector has been driven by the increase in urbanization and the development of activities related to commerce, education, health and public administration. Women are more represented in the service sector, however, often in low-paid occupations such as domestic work and public service.

Table 1 shows the percentage participation of men and women in the formal labor market subdivided by sectors, respecting the IBGE's classification of major economic sectors (Industry, civil construction, commerce, services and agriculture). The division into sub-periods every 5 years was performed to allow an interpretation of the complete period.

Table 1 – Percentage participation of the female and male segments in the labor market in Tocantins between 2000 and 2020

IBGE/Sectors	2000		2005		2010		2015		2020		TCSF
	But	Fem	But	Fem	But	Five	But	Five	But	Five	
Industry	10,64	2,57	10,28	2,72	11,32	3,31	11,94	3,99	11,04	3,19	24%
Construction	7,88	0,47	7,13	0,38	9,84	0,70	6,34	0,63	5,69	0,56	20%
Trade	16,47	9,98	17,30	11,43	19,06	14,10	20,22	15,65	20,74	16,57	66%
Services	55,73	86,21	52,78	84,31	49,63	80,69	49,70	78,17	48,86	77,51	-10%
Agricultural	9,28	0,76	12,51	1,16	10,15	1,20	11,79	1,56	13,67	2,17	186%

Prepared by the authors based on data extracted from CAGED/RAIS.

Legend: TCSF – Growth Rate of the Women's Segment, calculated from the variation in the growth of the percentage participation of the women's segment in each sector, between 2000 and 2020.

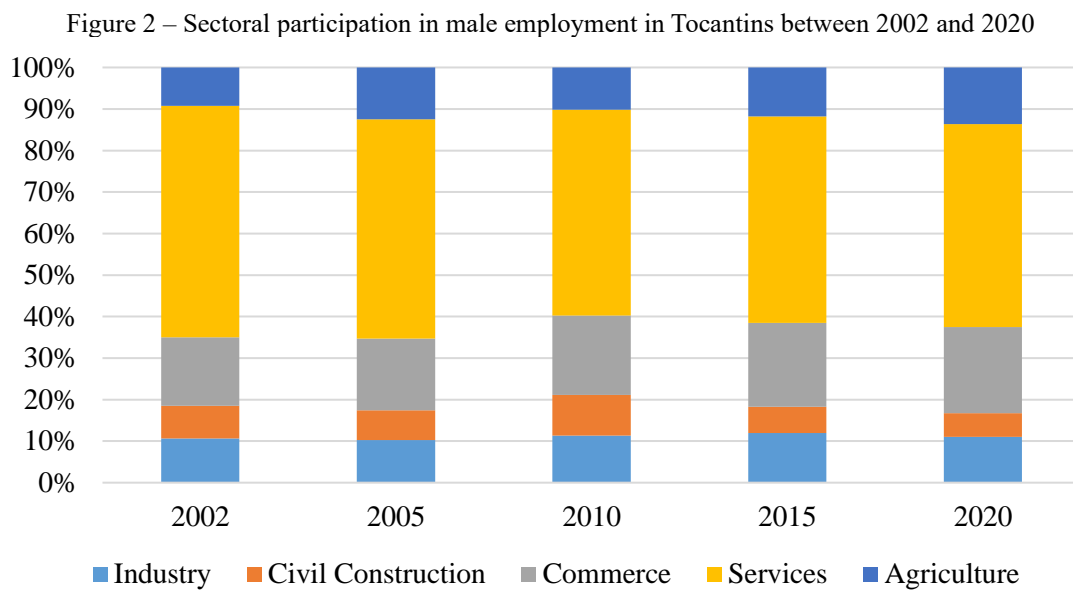
It is observed that the sectors in which women gained the most participation were Trade and Agriculture. Reinforcing the aforementioned regional conditions and characteristics. With emphasis on the Agriculture sector, in which women increased their participation by 186%. Going from 0.76% in 2000 to 2.17% in 2020.

However, it should be noted that it is in the sectors and Commerce and Services that women are widely employed. In 2000, these two sectors together employed 96.2% of all formally employed women in Tocantins and in 2020 this figure was 94.08%, indicating a persistence of structural inequality in the labor market.

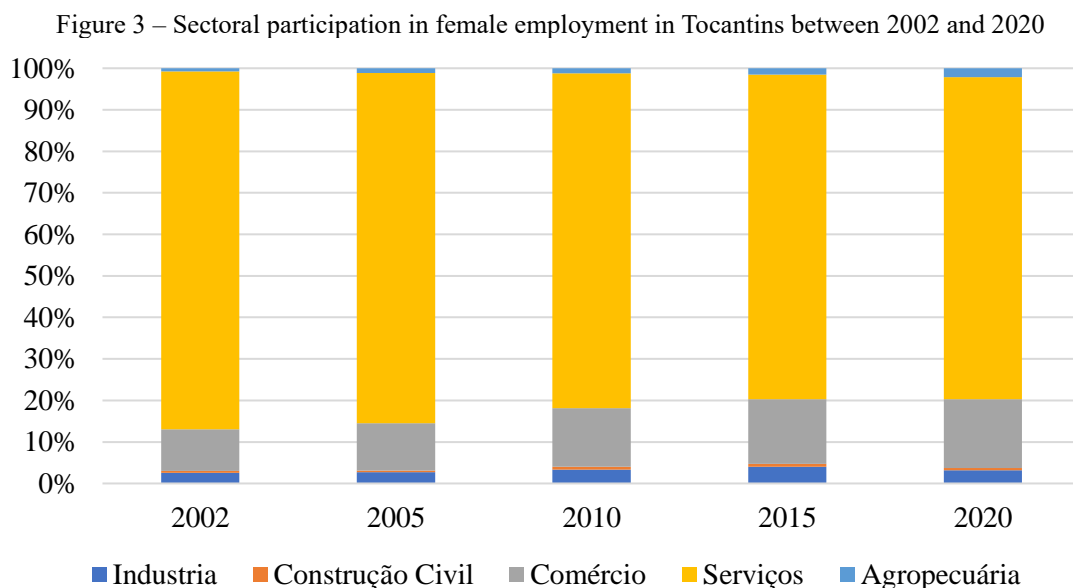
The concentration of women in certain sectors reflects the persistence of the sexual division of labor, in which activities traditionally associated with care, public service, and service provision are attributed to women. This segmentation limits women's opportunities in historically male sectors, such as manufacturing and technology, perpetuating wage inequalities and women's conditions of vulnerability.

The trade and services sectors tend to offer jobs with more precarious characteristics, such as high turnover, low wages, and lower labor benefits. The high female presence in these sectors contributes to the maintenance of a structural inequality in remuneration, aggravated by the social undervaluation of these occupations.

Figures 2 and 3 show the participation of employment at the sectoral level for the male and female genders. Performing an analysis of the data and a comparison between the distribution of men in the labor market in the different sectors with that of women, it is found that in Tocantins, the female concentration in the Service and Trade sectors is reinforced.



Prepared by the authors based on data extracted from CAGED/RAIS.



Prepared by the authors based on data extracted from CAGED/RAIS.



The high concentration of women in the trade and services sectors results from the horizontal segmentation of the labor market, where cultural norms and gender expectations direct women to areas associated with care and service, as highlighted above. The data presented for the state of Tocantins do not reflect a typical and specific reality of the region. As shown by the data released by the 2009 IPEA Technical Note, released from the work of the Brazilian Observatory of Gender Inequality, women in Brazil occupy the majority of jobs in the Trade and Services sectors. As Melo and Thomé (2018) point out:

The concentration of female labor is in the sectors of education, health, social services, domestic services, housing and food, activities that concern the reproduction of life. Meanwhile, men are allocated to the agricultural, industrial and civil construction sectors, directly related to the production of material goods (MELO and THOMÉ, 2018, p. 106).

In addition, these sectors offer greater flexibility and partial working hours, making it easier to reconcile with domestic responsibilities. Gender inequality also contributes, with lower wages and lower economic valuation in these sectors, as well as barriers to advancement in male-dominated areas. The educational background of women, often directed to professions related to care, reinforces this concentration.

The income differential between men and women can be explained by the insertion of women in sectors characterized by greater informality, vulnerability and worse hiring conditions. Gender stereotypes reinforce horizontal segregation in the labor market, justifying the idea that there are "women's jobs" and "men's jobs". However, traditionally male occupations have better wage conditions, greater labor protection, and social prestige, perpetuating gender inequality, since female professions tend to be less valued and paid.

As pointed out in the results presented by Oliveira et al (2021), the strong gender wage differences are explained by horizontal segregation, in which women are concentrated in sectors with lower average incomes, such as education, health, and services, while men predominate in sectors that are more economically valued, such as industry and construction. This imbalance reflects the structural devaluation of traditionally feminized activities, resulting in significant gender pay disparities.

The data in Table 2 show the percentage participation of women according to the sector between 2002 and 2020 in the state of Tocantins.

Table 2 – Percentage participation of women according to the sector between 2002 and 2020

IBGE Gr Sectors	2002	2005	2010	2015	2020
Industry	17,09	17,84	19,15	21,90	18,65
Construction	4,82	4,24	5,41	7,59	7,26
Trade	34,07	35,20	37,46	38,85	38,80
Services	56,87	56,76	56,83	56,35	55,74
Agricultural	6,52	7,07	8,72	9,77	11,19

Prepared by the authors based on data extracted from CAGED/RAIS.

The increase in women's participation in the agricultural sector in Tocantins can be attributed to several factors, such as the growth of training programs and public policies aimed at the inclusion of women in the countryside. In addition, there is a growing appreciation of agroecology and family farming, areas in which women play a key role. The modernization of the sector has also contributed, with the emergence of technologies that facilitate agricultural work, enabling greater female inclusion in activities traditionally occupied by men.

Despite an increase in the participation of women in the industry, civil construction and agriculture sectors, women still occupy the majority of jobs in the Trade and Services sectors, reinforcing the continuity of structural disparities between genders in the labor market in Tocantins.

In addition to the structural persistence of the concentration of women in the Trade and Services sectors, another relevant point to analyze the structure of the female market is regarding the salary range. The data extracted from RAIS take into account 10 income brackets, for simplification, we propose three brackets: Up to 3 MW, from 3.01 to 7 MW and above 7 MW.

According to the data presented in Table 3, women are predominantly concentrated in the average salary range of up to 3 minimum wages. The sectors of Commerce and Agriculture were the ones that stood out the most in terms of the concentration of women in this salary range. We highlight these results in blue. In 2002, women who held positions in the Trade sector and earned up to 3 MW accounted for 94.82% of the total number of women employed in the sector and in the Agriculture and Livestock sector, this result was 95.05%. In 2020, this scenario remains, with 92.31% of women allocated to the Trade sector in the salary range of up to 3 MW and 92.27% of women working in the Agriculture sector earning up to 3 MW. This reinforces not only the sectoral concentration of women, but also their allocation to the lowest average salary brackets.

In the other sectors, although to a lesser extent, the reality is the same, most women occupy the lower income strata. In industry, for example, in 2002 88.28% of women earned up to 3 MW and in 2002 this figure fell to 85.32%, despite the drop, it is a timid movement that is not enough to verify a reversal of the structural disparities between the genders in the labor market.

The service sector, despite concentrating a large number of women, as shown in Figures 3, exhibits a greater distribution among the pay ranges due to the diversity of occupations offered in this sector. This is due to the fact that the sector covers both low-paid jobs, such as in commerce and care

activities, and better-paid positions in areas such as information technology, finance, management, and specialized services. In addition, the growing female presence in leadership positions and the increase in women's professional qualification have contributed to a greater salary variation within the sector, expanding the distribution between the different pay ranges.

In recent decades, the service sector has stood out as the main generator of jobs in Brazil, driven largely by the process of outsourcing the economy (COTRIM et al., 2020). Outsourcing allowed companies to transfer secondary activities to service providers, which expanded the demand for labor in areas such as cleaning, security, IT, administration, and specialized services. This phenomenon has also opened up more opportunities for women, who were already predominantly concentrated in this sector, increasing their participation in different pay ranges and occupations within the sector (RODRIGUES, 2023).

Table 3 – Percentage participation of women at the sectoral level, according to the salary range

IBGE Gr Sector	Remun Belt. Average (SM)	2002	2005	2010	2015	2020
Industry	Up to 3 MW	88,28	88,32	85,12	89,00	85,32
	From 3.01 to 7 MW	9,32	9,60	10,44	7,72	10,30
	Above 7 SM	2,41	2,08	4,44	3,28	4,38
Construction	Up to 3 MW	79,79	79,52	86,14	85,88	84,29
	From 3.01 to 7 MW	16,03	16,72	11,17	11,32	7,55
	Above 7 SM	4,18	3,75	2,69	2,80	8,16
Trade	Up to 3 MW	94,82	95,07	95,28	94,66	92,31
	From 3.01 to 7 MW	4,67	4,47	4,15	4,55	4,48
	Above 7 SM	0,51	0,46	0,58	0,79	3,21
Services	Up to 3 MW	67,71	67,90	68,41	64,37	64,54
	From 3.01 to 7 MW	21,97	25,37	24,95	27,34	26,15
	Above 7 SM	10,32	6,73	6,64	8,29	9,31
Agricultural	Up to 3 MW	95,05	95,02	96,95	94,29	92,27
	From 3.01 to 7 MW	3,66	4,30	2,73	3,48	4,76
	Above 7 SM	1,29	0,68	0,31	2,23	2,97

Prepared by the authors based on data extracted from CAGED/RAIS.

In summary, the data show that the distribution of female employment in different sectors and income strata reflects a combination of structural and cultural factors. Women in the state of Tocantins are strongly concentrated in sectors such as commerce and services, areas traditionally associated with care and support activities. These sectors, often characterized by lower average remuneration, are responsible for the high female presence in the lower salary brackets. However, the service sector, in particular, has a wider distribution of income, as it ranges from low-skilled occupations to more specialized and leadership positions, allowing for greater wage variation, and



has undergone a restructuring process led by the spread of outsourcing and access to leadership positions and jobs with higher average remuneration.

However, the data presented here reinforce the difficulties that women in Tocantins face in the labor market, perpetuating the disparities between genders in the labor market. These results have already been pointed out in different analysis cuts, both at the national level (AMARAL, 2012; SIQUEIRA and SAMPARO, 2017; CARVALHO and VIEGO, 2023), as well as at the regional level such as the state of Paraná (CIELO et al., 2011; TONHATI and MACEDO, 2020), Minas Gerais (DOMINGUES et al., 2012) among others. And in the state of Tocantins, based on the period analyzed, between 2000 and 2021, the results show a movement of perpetuation of the concentration of women both at the sectoral level (service and commerce) and in the income stratum below 3 minimum wages.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of exclusion and struggle of women in the labor market is still reflected today in the state of Tocantins, where gender disparities persist. While progress has been made, women continue to face significant barriers to achieving equal employment conditions. Tackling these inequalities requires a sustained effort both at the level of public policy and in the transformation of social norms.

The trajectory of women in the labor market is marked by centuries of exclusion, discrimination and the struggle for rights. Historically, women's difficulties in entering and thriving in the labor market are rooted in social, cultural, legal, and economic factors.

In Tocantins, as in other regions of Brazil, women face challenges related to entering the labor market. The lack of formal employment opportunities, especially in rural areas, limits options for many women, who end up resorting to informal work or domestic work, which is often poorly paid and without social protection. This leads to a high concentration of women in the services and trade sectors, where there is wide access to women, but with precarious working conditions, vulnerable jobs and low average remuneration.

Regarding the pay gap, the data show that women are concentrated in the lower income stratum, regardless of the sector. This wage disparity is especially pronounced in sectors such as agriculture and services, in which on average 95% of women earn up to 3 minimum wages.

The labor market in Tocantins faces the challenge of creating employment opportunities that are inclusive and sustainable, especially considering gender disparities. There is a need for public policies that promote gender equality, such as specific training programs for women, incentives for the formalization of employment in the agricultural sector, greater support for women entrepreneurs,



improvement of qualification and professional training, and support in women's family care activities, such as help with daycare centers and specialized health care for working mothers.

In addition, the development of insignificant sectors in the state, such as the industrial sector, can offer new opportunities for qualified employment, and access to technology and means of production that increase women's labor productivity can contribute to mitigating income disparities between genders in the state. The diversification of the state's economy, along with the promotion of gender equality, can contribute to a fairer and more dynamic labor market in Tocantins.



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