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# Women and education in the present day: challenges in the face of inequalities in Brazil

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## Abstract

The study addresses the status of women in relation to social class and education, highlighting social inequalities, based on social class, gender, and race. The purpose is to problematize this relationship. Methodologically, it is based on the history of the present time approach (Dosse, 2012a; 2012b), covering the period between 2012 and 2024. To this end, data from Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística- IBGE (2023; 2022) and Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos - INEP (2023) are analyzed. The results indicate that women have progressively advanced in schooling compared to men, particularly in higher education, mainly in the areas of education, health, welfare, and care. In addition, women's professional performance in areas that have representations of care as their substrate, often linked to motherhood is undervalued.

Keywords: Woman. Education. Present time. Social class.

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## Mulheres e educação no tempo presente: desafios ante as desigualdades no Brasil

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## Resumo

O trabalho aborda a situação das mulheres em relação à classe social e à educação, destacando as desigualdades sociais, dimensionadas pela condição de classe, gênero e raça. O propósito é problematizar essa relação. Metodologicamente, sustenta-se na abordagem da história do tempo presente (Dosse, 2012a; 2012b), contemplando o período entre 2012 e 2024. Para tanto, são analisados, sobretudo, dados do Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística- IBGE (2023; 2022) e do Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos- INEP (2023). Os resultados indicam que mulheres têm progressivamente

avanzado em processos de escolarização em relação ao sexo masculino, destacadamente no ensino superior, majoritariamente na área de educação, saúde, bem-estar e cuidado. Além disso, a atuação profissional feminina em áreas destinadas ao cuidado, como enfermagem, e outras relacionadas à maternidade, é pouco valorizada.

Palavras-chaves: Mulher. Educação. Tempo presente. Classe social.

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## **Las mujeres y la educación en la actualidad: desafíos ante las desigualdades en Brasil**

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### **Resumen**

2 El trabajo aborda la condición de las mujeres en relación con la clase social y la educación, destacando las desigualdades sociales, dimensionadas por la condición de clase social, género y raza. El propósito es problematizar esta relación. Metodológicamente, se basa en el enfoque de la historia del tiempo presente (Dosse, 2012a: 2012b), contemplando el período comprendido entre 2012 y 2024. Para ello, se analizan principalmente datos de lo Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística- IBGE (2023; 2022) y del Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos- INEP (2023). Los resultados indican que las mujeres han avanzado progresivamente en los procesos de escolarización en relación con los hombres, especialmente en la educación superior, principalmente en las áreas de educación, salud, bienestar y cuidados. Además, la actividad profesional en áreas que tienen como sustrato representaciones del cuidado, a menudo vinculadas a la maternidad, está poco valorada.

Palabras claves: Mujer. Educación. Tiempo presente. Clase social.

### **Introduction**

In this paper, I address women in relation to social class and education, as the title indicates. I understand that addressing social class already points to social differentiations, focusing on education and, in relation to it, to social inequalities in Brazil, having the present time as a milestone. Inequalities are scaled by the condition of social class, gender, and race.

The present time is a reference to historiography that deals with a recent past of which we are witnesses, about events that we have been following and that challenge us to interpret them with due distance. It allows us to analyze new objects or even those in which recurrences, continuities, are present as is the case of the subject dealt with here. It is not today that Brazilian women, in general, those from less favored social segments, face problems in relation to education, especially at school. Historically, they have been excluded from education systems, a privilege of which elite women have always been part. There have certainly been advances, however, much still needs to be achieved.

The present time, therefore, allows us to revisit old objects in the light of the time in which the continuities take place, but under other interpretations. "It resides in the contemporaneity of the non-contemporary, in the temporal thickness of the 'space of experience' and in the present of the incorporated past" (Dosse, 2012a, p. 2).

Women, social class, and inequalities in relation to education articulate the logic of the present time in which

[...] the historical reading of the event is no longer reducible to the event studied, but observed in its trail, located in an inventive chain. Every discourse about an event connotes a series of previous events, which gives the discursive weave that rejoins them in an insertion in the intrigue all its importance [...] (Dosse, 2012b, p. 168).

In this sense, although there have been achievements, the different forms of subjugation and exclusions have brought limits to women, especially those of the less favored classes, to different modes of access, including school education.

Thus, my purpose is to problematize, in the present time, the access of women to education in less favored social conditions and the challenges posed to them in the face of inequalities in Brazil. Therefore, I will initially use the idea of social class in relation to the subject brought here.

It is worth saying that, by social class, I mean "[...]a condition in which a large group of people who occupy the same position in the social relations of production are located" (Weisheimer, 2012, p. 29). The composition of this

universe includes the financial conditions, those demanded by income, access to knowledge, lifestyle, which contributes to a class position in the social universe, materialized by the volume of possession of goods. This composition permeates the appreciation that I will make next about the woman. It means that the largest or smallest volume of goods, whether material or not, compete to situate the social place. Education, so to speak, is an immaterial good that contributes to the enjoyment of material goods. Failure to access it limits citizen participation in the world of work.

Thus, this text is organized into two sections. In the first, I deal with women in the past and present, demarcated by the last twelve years, that is, between 2012 and 2024. The definition of the period is justified by the possibility of dealing with the subject, considering more recent statistical data, especially from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), and, at the same time, by making it possible to establish relationships with data from previous periods – analytical movement – which are part of the methodological exercise of the history of the present time, which does not lose sight of the necessary setbacks for the reflective exercise on the object of study in contemporary times. In the second section, I highlight questions about social inequalities and challenges posed to women in the present time.

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## **Women, social class, and education: a little history and in the present time**

Historically, women's access to school education has been characterized by what Rosemberg (2020) called a turbulent journey. Access to formal education began with the Law of 1827, which restricted women's entry into elementary schools. This concession to the teacher-formation school determined a slower progress in school formation. The entry of women into teacher-formation schools allowed female recruitment for elementary teaching and presented itself as a solution to the problem of labor in elementary education and made it possible for them to enter a socially accepted profession for the female universe. From the end of the 19th century, the process of feminization of teaching served to give more defined contours to the teaching profession, since this entry represented a path for women who needed to work as well as for those

who wanted to study a little more (Louro, 1997).

About working as a teacher, at the beginning of the 20th century, Louro says that it was thought to be

[...] more suitable for women, because they require child care; being a teacher is, in a way, an extension of the role of a mother. In addition, the teaching profession is also seen as a good preparation for the future mother of the family (Louro, 1989, p. 35).

The creation and consolidation of teacher-formation schools was a slow process. These institutions became formation centers, especially for teachers, in the Republic. Women began to see in this profession possibilities for greater social insertion, when teacher-formation schools were expanded (Tanuri, 2000).

In this process, teacher-formation schools, even though they were prominent in the 1946 organic laws of teacher-formation education, as well as a distinction in the Law of December 20, 1961, did not correspond in terms of teacher formation and the needs of Brazil at the time (Fusari; Cortese, 1989). For these authors, there were "many setbacks and difficulties". It is also added that the teacher-formation courses under the aegis of organic laws were marked by duality in formation, by instituting the formation of teachers for the elite and for the popular strata. The first cycle, destined to the formation of regent teachers with was destined to work in the rural area and the second cycle, with diversified characteristics, provided conditions for continuity of studies and work in the urban area.

The process of insertion of women in formal education, specifically through teacher-formation schools, until the 1970s, was possible due to the opportunities offered to middle-class girls who saw in schooling for teacher formation an opportunity to reconcile marriage with the condition of being a teacher. In addition, they could occupy an important social place, since they allowed women not only to be mothers, wives, but also to exercise a profession that allowed them to leave the private for the public space.

Since the First Republic, when teacher-formation schools were consolidated, the presence of women in teaching became accentuated. Under organic laws and Law 4024/61, teacher formation courses until the 1970s

were already marked by the female presence (Pizzato; Furtado; Corrêa, 2023).

In the 1990s, this process culminated in an absolute majority of women in the teaching profession, which, according to Vianna (2013, p. 165), was related "[...] even indirectly, to the dynamics of the labor market and, in it, the sexual division of labor and the configuration of the so-called female professions".

But what about the other women? Those who did not seek the magisterium? As previously mentioned, entry into school education was a concession given by the Law of 1827, which dealt with the school of first letters. Those women who did not see teaching as a means of expanding social insertion also faced difficulties not only in entering, but in advancing school education.

The first half of the 20th century, notably, was a period in which women's achievements gradually expanded. The First World War imposed on urban women the imperative to leave home to work in factories, while they gradually entered the school universe. Few became journalists, novelists, nurses, doctors, despite the growth of the feminist movement that gradually advanced in the process of seeking and achieving rights.

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**Table 1 – Timeline of the conquest of women's rights**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Earned rights</b>
1827	Girls are allowed to attend school
1832	Nísia Floresta publishes the work "Direitos das Mulheres e Injustiças dos Homens" (Women's Rights and Men's Injustices)
1879	Women gain the right to access to colleges
1910	The first female political party is created (Partido Republicano Feminino [Women's Republican Party])
1932	Women gain the right to vote
1962	The Married Woman Statute is created (Law no. 4,212 of 08/27/62 – permission to work outside the home, inheritance, and custody of children in case of separation)
1974	Women gain the right to own a credit card
1977	The Divorce Act is passed

Source: Sindpreve-AI (2023)

**Table 1 – Timeline of the conquest of women’s rights**

Years	Earned rights
1979	Women guarantee the right to practice football
1985	The first Women’s Police Station is created
1988	The Brazilian Constitution now recognizes women as equal to men
2002	"Lack of virginity" is no longer a reason to annul the marriage
2006	The Maria da Penha Law is sanctioned
2015	The Femicide Law is approved
2018	Female sexual harassment has come to be considered a crime
2021	Creation of the law to prevent, repress and combat political violence against women

Source: Sindpreve-AI (2023).

It is worth highlighting some of this data. First, the time that elapses between women’s access to elementary schooling and entry into higher education. They are fifty-two years old, which refer to the social understanding, especially for men, that women should dispense with school education since their destiny would be to marry, procreate and take care of the home. The idea was articulated to the imperative of keeping the woman in the subjugation of the husband, overcome by the enactment of the Married Woman Statute of 1962, and, later, by the 1988 Constitution, which recognized the equality of women’s rights in relation to men. Second, between 2006 and 2018, although the Maria da Penha Law represents an important legal achievement from the point of view of violence against women, only nine years later was the Femicide Law sanctioned and, twelve years later, sexual harassment becomes a crime. Table 2 presents relatively recent figures on femicides by states in Brazil.

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Table 2 – Victims of violence and femicides in each state in 2024

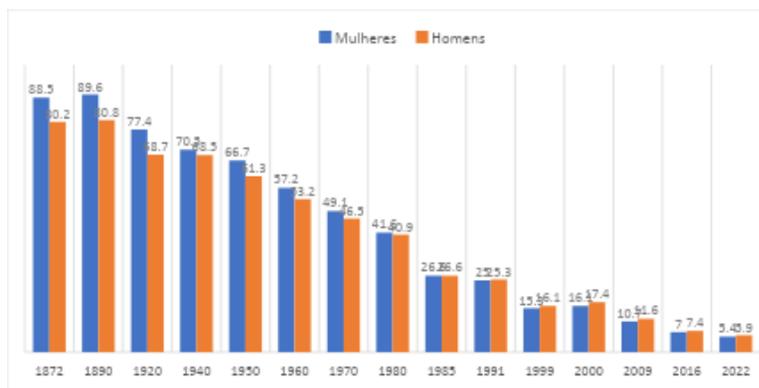
State	Victims of violence	Femicides
Amazonas	604	33
Bahia	257	46
Ceará	207	45
Maranhão	365	54
Pará	388	41
Pernambuco	312	69
Piauí	238	36
Rio de Janeiro	633	63
Sao Paulo	1,177	144
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,181</b>	<b>531</b>

Source: Campos (2024).

8 Despite those achievements since the Maria da Penha Law, the data on femicides are impressive.

In addition, in parallel to the different achievements, illiteracy rates are slowly decreasing, which can be seen in the following graph, when these rates begin to fall in relation to men, especially from the 1950s.

Graph 1 – Literacy rates - women and men



Source: Demographic censuses (1872 to 1980, 1991, 2000), PNADs (1985, 1999, 2009), apud Rosemberg and Madsen (2011), PNAD/IBGE (2016, 2022).<sup>1</sup>

However, we can also observe that the process of access to formal education is slow until the 1980s and, from there, it gains relative intensity. This also means that women's access to schooling allows for better insertion in the world of work.

If illiteracy decreases, the tendency is for women to advance in terms of education, which allows social mobility. It is observed that, from the 1990s, the percentages of female schooling, although shy, grow in relation to those of men. It should not be overlooked that the enrollment of women from economically disadvantaged social segments into school is mediated by the challenges posed by caring for children, when they are mothers, and for the household. It is their responsibility to take care of the house and provide it, especially when they head the household. Samara (1997) points out that, since the 19th century, women have led the household. IBGE data from 2022 show that the percentage of female heads of household rose from 38.7% in 2010 to 49.1% in 2022, a significant percentage. Data from Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies show that:

Most households in Brazil are headed by women. Of the 75 million households, 50.8% had female leadership, corresponding to 38.1 million families. The families with male leadership totaled 36.9 million. *Black women led 21.5 million homes (56.5%) and non-black women led 16.6 million (43.5%)* in the third quarter of 2022 (DIEESE, 2023, p. 5, emphasis added).

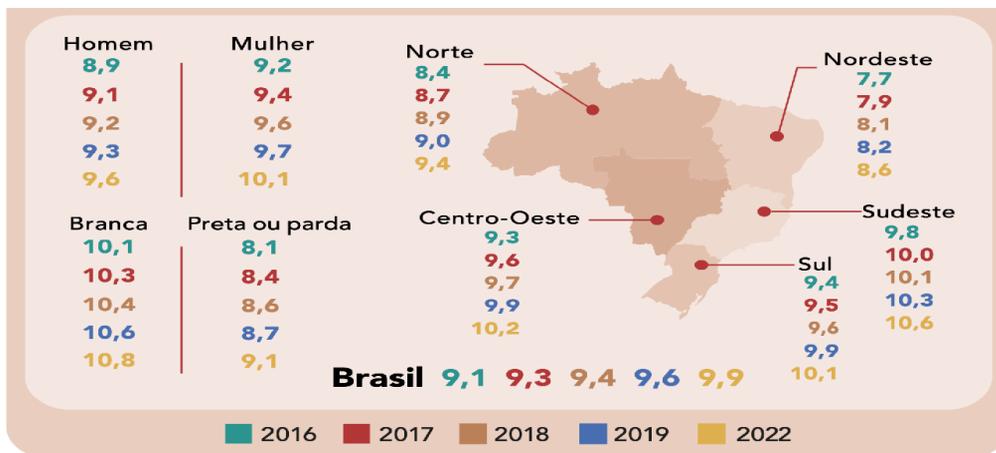
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I must highlight the data on race, black women have more responsibilities for the support of families than whites. Of these data, certainly the majority are poor and salaried women.

Therefore, these data contribute to reiterate characteristics and understand that current inequalities have long and, therefore, historical roots. They also contribute to understanding that women's achievements of a school educational nature have been gradual.

In fact, the following graph contains Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics data, which indicate percentages of schooling by sex, color, or race.

Graph 2 – Average number of years of schooling of people aged 25 years or older, according to sex, color or race and the large regions 2016-2022



Source: IBGE, Research Board, Coordination of Household Sample Surveys, National Household Sample Survey Continues 2016/2022.

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In comparison with men by region, it can be seen that education indicators have increased between 2016 and 2022. The data referring to color are noteworthy, among which brown and black have lower percentages, which leads to the inference that there are unequal advances, indicating the fact that race and class exert a strong influence on access and permanence in school education.

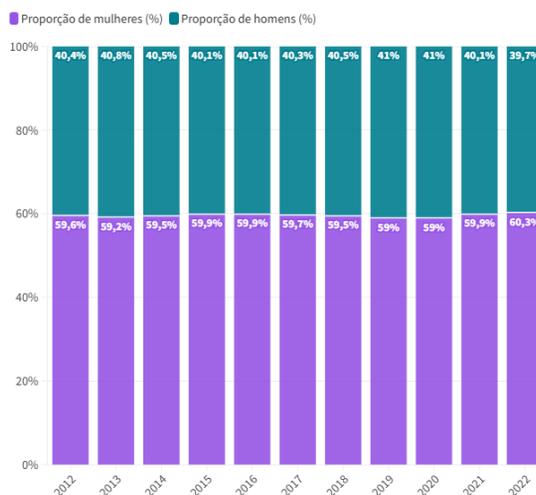
From a regional point of view, the Southeast Region has the highest rates of female household leaders, indicating, according to that institute, the consequences of social and economic changes. In general, the South and Midwest Regions are next.

But, according to Rosemberg:

Women's education entered the national education agenda in the 1990s when Brazil, like other countries in Latin America, experienced an intense process of educational reforms driven by international organizations (Unesco, Unicef, World Bank, among others), subsumed in the commitments of the international campaign "Education for All" (Rosemberg, 2020, p. 345).

Thus, everything indicates that the entry of women's education into the agenda of governments after the 1990s contributed both to the advance in terms of literacy (graph 1) and to the increase in years of schooling, according to the data contained in graph 2. This can configure female achievements, amplified by the insertion in several professional fields when they enter higher education, for example (graph 3).

**Graph 3 – Proportion of graduating students in person undergraduate courses**



Source: Gender Statistics - IBGE– chart prepared by Tatu Agency.

The data above indicate that the proportion of women in higher education in relation to men, from the year 2012, is higher, reaching the rate of 60.3% compared to 39.7% of men. Although the data from this agency record this percentage based on the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the higher education census of the Ministry of Education indicates that women are the majority in higher education enrollment, with 59% in 2023, while males have 41%, a significant difference of eight percentage points (INEP, 2023).

In this universe, the female presence registers 77.9% in the area of Education followed by Health and Welfare, with 73.3%, Social Sciences, and Communication and Information, with 72%. In 2019, according to the

National Institute of Pedagogical Studies (INEP, anachronym in Portuguese), women occupied 88.3% of the Welfare area and the fifth position in the Education area, with 65.6%, behind the areas of Personal Services (77.9%), Health (73.2%), Social and Behavioral Sciences (70.4%) and Veterinary (68.5%) (INEP, 2020).

The majority female presence in the educational area, according to Louro (1997), and, later, added to the Health and Welfare area, point to the permanence of a possible relationship between the logics and/or representations resulting from motherhood, which is intrinsically related to care. Although the professional nature of the female teaching activity has advanced through higher education, it has not yet been enough to overcome this logic.

Considering the above, it is important to highlight that, although a significant portion of women have achieved school advances and, therefore, social achievements, another portion continues, according to Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, anachronym in Portuguese)/Educa (2023), dedicating more time to household chores and care of people. While the

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[...] men dedicated an average of 11 hours a week to the care of people and/or household chores, women dedicated about 21 hours to these tasks. Women who need to reconcile paid work with domestic work and care of people end up having partial jobs, that is, with fewer weekly hours (IBGE, 2023, p. 1).

In this regard, we inferred about a social segment with low schooling, which can demonstrate that there are differences in access and school progression that affect lower income strata. According to Davis (2016), many women in poverty add the role of mothers to that of domestic workers to ensure the survival of their children. Many enter the labor market early, with little qualification and, therefore, are destined for precarious and low paid jobs.

The greater entry of women into higher education otherwise incorporates the contradiction that this achievement does not result in better opportunities in the world of work. The educational areas with the data that indicate a higher concentration of women are undervalued. In Education, for example, the biggest race is directed to education program courses, whose job opportunities and wages are in basic education. Although the minimum salary for

this level of education, established in 2024 by the Ministry of Education, was R\$4,480.57 (Brazilian reais), there was no guarantee that state governments would comply with the established amount. Thus, due to variables that mark the differences between states and municipalities for salary differentiation, remuneration may be linked to the functions performed, related to education, experience in the role, and the company's or school's policies on work positions, salaries, and careers, respectively, in the private and public systems. These elements contribute to the contradiction between greater schooling and inequality in the world of work.

The advancement of the insertion of women in higher education demonstrates that, unlike what happened at the turn of the 19th century to the first half of the 21st, significant changes have occurred and are underway.

In fact, the historical path of women in Brazilian education reveals a process characterized by slow and selective concessions, in which teaching has been the main route of insertion in work permeated by class distinctions.

## Women, social inequalities, education, and challenges

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Brazil has always been an unequal country. If we return to the illiteracy indicators mentioned above, we will see that we cannot fail to historically consider them to think about issues of this nature today. The data refer to a slave, patrimonial and patriarchal past. The set of these factors historically consolidates a structure of exclusion of poor, black, indigenous populations, men and women without access to goods and services fundamental to a dignified life.

According to Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, IBGE (2022), the Brazilian population is composed of about 104.5 million women, representing 51.5% of the Brazilian population, and 98.5 million men, which correspond to 48.5% of the population residing in the country. So, a country with more women than men. From this universe, although we do not have data on the percentage of women excluded from the educational process and from minimum conditions of dignified life, it does not remove the possibility of reflecting on the importance of women in our society, as mothers, students, and workers in general.

Social inequalities in Brazil increased even more after the period of

the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Bank report (2022) "*Brazil Poverty and Equity Assessment: Looking Ahead of Two Crises*" combines data from household surveys, among others, related to how the most vulnerable resisted the impacts of the pandemic and how government support provided protection during this period.

Thus, the vulnerable in Brazil, representing 40% of the population, were the ones who most felt the economic consequences of the pandemic. Women had decreased participation in the labor force, which was largely due to gender social roles that increased unpaid domestic work and child educational burdens during school blocks. "Income transfer programs were able to protect a large part of the population from the immediate impacts of the pandemic" (World Bank, 2022, w/p), however, they were not enough to reverse the situation of social vulnerability.

In this way, the pandemic also generated a high cost for the accumulation of human capital in the long term and widened the gap of inequality, therefore, of poverty, and, so to speak, of emphasis on the condition of social class. In November 2020, 27.8% of children in the North and Northeast Regions, the poorest in the country, were not enrolled or had no access to school activities. The report also shows that,

[...] despite the progress made in the previous decades, the deep socioeconomic divisions in the country are historical problems. Between 2001 and 2012, Brazil's GDP grew at an average annual rate of 2.6% in real terms, and the income inequality gap narrowed significantly as Brazil experienced a significant 16 percentage point reduction in overall poverty. Still, disparities in the Brazilian population remain: almost three out of ten poor are Afro-Brazilian women living in urban areas, while three-quarters of all children living in rural areas are poor. (World Bank, 2022, w/p).

IBGE data from 2021, in the pandemic scenario, show the monthly income of men and women:

Table 3 – Labor income indicators – women

Women					
	14 to 29 years	30 to 49 years old	50 to 59 years old	60 years or older	Total
Usual real average income from main job (reais/month)	1,438	2,277	2,419	2,437	2,095
Usual real average income from all jobs (reais/month)	1,459	2,353	2,488	2,534	2,158

Source: IBGE (2021)

Table 4 – Labor income indicators – men

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Men					
	14 to 29 years old	30 to 49 years old	50 to 59 years old	60 years or older	Total
Usual real average income from main job (reais/month)	1,635	2,893	3,003	3,408	2,622
Usual real average income from all jobs (reais/month)	1,664	2,975	3,116	3,526	2,698

Source: IBGE (2021)

Considering that the value of the minimum wage in 2021 was 1,100 reais, the real monthly gain did not exceed, roughly, two minimum wages, in the age group between 30 and 60 years old for women. This allows pointing to historical wage inequalities, which therefore remain. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics points out that the wage gap between men and

women reached twenty-two percent at the end of 2022, rising again after that year.

It is also noteworthy that the wage differences between men and women start in youth, considering the age groups between 14 and 60 years old, increasing as ages increase.

The challenges are many and are linked to gender. Women, even if they have the same schooling as men, receive lower salaries. Data from Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies for the third quarter of 2022, considering average income and education, indicate that women with a complete higher education received a salary of R\$4,324 (Brazilian reais) and men of R\$7,542.00 (Brazilian reais). The challenge of diversifying the areas of formation is also aligned, which points to the expansion of opportunities for access to the world of work.

From these data, the generalization is applicable to the other levels of education in terms of wage differentiation, as well as to those that point out that, even without studies or with one year of schooling, the income of women was, on average, R\$642.00 (Brazilian reais) and men of R\$962.00 (Brazilian reais).

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Another challenge: to reconcile domestic work, which is still mainly female, with work outside the home and the imperatives of schooling placed as a condition for better professional opportunities, which manifests itself mainly for low-income women.

There are also challenges in relation to access to housing, health, and basic sanitation, which are fundamental conditions for access and permanence in school education. These make it possible to follow the communicative processes of today's world, especially when we consider the women who head households.

Thus, challenges of a different nature are posed to women, particularly those with lower purchasing power and who are in the lowest social stratification.

## Final considerations

The purpose of this work was to questioning the relationship between social class and education in approaching the history of the present time, indicating challenges to be faced. To this end, it brought understandings about this approach, as well as social class, necessary to analyze the object of study.

In addition, it indicates as imperative to bring reflections that contemplate, albeit briefly, the historical path of women in Brazil with their insertion in the process of late schooling to participation in the universe of substantially female work.

Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics data for the 21st century point to the progressive participation of women in the educational field through entry into university education with more data than men, and, as a result, their insertion in the world of work.

However, although advances of this nature are verified, they are limited to specific fields, such as Education, Health, Care and Welfare. Pointing to low-paying positions, these areas seem to be related to a kind of tradition of representations of the feminine, associated with motherhood and caregiving. Therefore, of little value and, paradoxically, both formation in the area of Education and the exercise of the profession of teacher in this context make us infer about the social value attributed to the school, even though it is a necessary good for the dynamics of social and productive relations in the so-called postmodern world. In this sense, it is possible to establish borders between the History and Sociology of Education considering that the insertion of women in the educational professional universe, mainly as elementary teachers, was linked to the function and roles related to motherhood, as well as, in general, to a specific social semester of which low-income women are part.

From this perspective, it is appropriate to resume Dosse (2012 and 2012b) in the understanding of elements of the past incorporated in the present, due to the traces that remain in the contemporaneity and, therefore, cannot be ignored in the studies of the present time. The present time should not necessarily be understood without the historicity that both demarcates and situates the object of study, but above all allows us to understand it as an explanatory reason.

Access to higher education in the previously indicated areas also refers to the questioning of who these women would be. What socioeconomic status would they have? Certainly, as they are not profitable professions from the salary point of view, they would not be occupied by social segments of privileged purchasing power.

In addition, although these advances are verified, within the data presented here, differences between sexes and race are observed, in which browns and blacks have less schooling.

Thus, gender, class and race inequalities still structure the social and educational reality in Brazil in relation to women, especially the poor ones. Although the data show an increase in literacy rates and a greater presence in higher education, wage disparities and requirements that hinder female social mobility persist. The data point to wage issues, revealing that, although access to education is a relevant achievement, it does not guarantee decent wage conditions, pointing to the mismatch in terms of gender relations, as well as to a kind of reinforcement of the condition of social class.

18 In this way, no less articulated to the dimensions of gender and social class, race manifests itself as an important data to consider in access to Education. Black and brown women constitute part of the female population in conditions of low education in relation to white women. This bottleneck is particularly evident when associated with the North and Northeast Regions. Browns and blacks are poor women, heads of household who make efforts not only to ensure the family's livelihood but also to remain in school, which refers to difficulties in expanding insertion in the world of work. The universe of work becomes restricted, which creates a kind of vicious circle, from which to leave requires greater sacrifices. School becomes a dream to be fulfilled for many, when their children, upon becoming adults, leave the maternal home, and they can pursue professional education.

Thus, several challenges are posed, from the gender issue, related to the salary aspect, to the reconciliation of the study with domestic activities, continuing education, especially for black and brown women of few socioeconomic conditions.

## Note

1. Initial version of the work presented at the XVI National Seminar on Educational Policies and Curriculum, and at the V International Seminar on Public Educational Policies, Culture and Teacher Formation, held at the Federal University of Pará. Among the elderly women, the illiteracy rate in 2022 was 16.3% and, among men, 15.7%.

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