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ABSTRACT

Single Mothers and Poverty in Costa Rica^{*}

Despite increasing average real family incomes in Costa Rica in the late 1990s and early 2000s, poverty rates did not fall. In this paper, we argue that during this period economic growth in Costa Rica did not translate into reduced poverty because of changes in family structure and in the labor market, and that these changes had an important gender dimension. Specifically, an increase in the proportion of Costa Rican households headed by single mothers led to an increase in the number of women with children entering the labor force. Many of these mothers, new entrants to the labor force, were unable or unwilling to find full-time work in the high-paying formal sector, and ended up unemployed or working part-time as self-employed workers. These labor market phenomena, in turn, contributed to low incomes for households vulnerable to poverty, especially those households headed by single mothers.

JEL Classification: I32, J12, J38

Keywords: poverty, single mothers, employment, wages, Central America, Costa Rica

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I. Introduction

From the 1970s to the early 1990s poverty in Costa Rica was counter-cyclical, falling during expansions and rising during recessions. However, from 1996 to 2003, despite increasing average real family incomes, the poverty rate stagnated (see figures 1 and 2). In this paper, we argue that faster economic growth in Costa Rica did not translate into reduced poverty because of changes in family structure and in the labor market, and that these changes had an important gender dimension. Further, we argue that the changes in family structure and changes in the labor market were related. Specifically, an increase in the proportion of Costa Rican households headed by single mothers was associated with an increase in the number of women with young children entering the labor force. Many of these mothers, new entrants to the labor force, were unable or unwilling to find full-time work in the high-paying formal sector, and ended up unemployed or working part-time as self-employed workers. These labor market phenomena, in turn, contributed to increased inequality, increased unemployment, and low incomes for households vulnerable to poverty, especially those households headed by single mothers.

The *2004 Social Panorama of Latin America* notes that "The most significant trend [in family structure in Latin America] has been the increase in single-parent households headed by women" (ECLAC, 2004, page 198). Our paper contributes to the understanding of how this change in family structure has contributed to poverty and changes in the labor market in one Latin American country.

The structure of the rest of this paper is as follows. In section II we describe the changes in the labor market that are responsible for stagnating poverty rates in the 1996-2003 period in Costa Rica. In section III we describe the changes in family structure during the same period, and make the argument that these changes in family structure were an important cause of many of the labor market changes that led to increasing inequality and stagnating poverty.

II. Changes in the Labor Market

Two labor market phenomenon help explain why poverty rates in Costa Rica stagnated despite economic growth: increased income and earnings inequality and increased unemployment rates among members of poor households.

a. Increased inequality

After falling for at least three decades (in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s), earnings and income inequality in Costa Rica began to increase in the mid-1990s (see Gindling and Trejos, 2005). Figure 3 shows that family income inequality fell from 1990 to 1995, and then increased from 1995 to 2003 (as poverty rates stagnated).² The increase in earnings and income inequality was one of the reasons why rising incomes in the later half of the 1990s did not translate into falling poverty in Costa Rica.

In a study of changes in earnings inequality in Costa Rica, Gindling and Trejos (2005) conclude that the most important cause of the increase in earnings inequality in the 1990s was an increase in the proportion of workers working a non-standard work week (part time and over time work) which was caused largely by an increase in the proportion of women working part time as self employed workers.³ This increased the inequality in hours worked among workers, which increased inequality in monthly and yearly earnings. The increase in women working part time and as self employed workers is also correlated with stagnating poverty; from 1996 to 2003 the proportion of women working part-time increased substantially, from 42.7% to 49.5%, while the proportion of men working part time remained stable (based on the authors' calculations using the Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes). This was a different pattern from that in the early 1990s, when the proportion of women working part time was stable (at around 42.5%). Figure 4 shows that, while there was an increase in the proportion of both men and women working as self-employed from 1990 to 2003, the increase was much greater for women than for men (the proportion of women working as self-employed increased from 16% to 25%, while the proportion of men working as self employed increased from

² Figure 3 presents the log variance of income, which is a measure of inequality that is sensitive to changes in the incomes of the poor. Other inequality indicators, such as the Gini coefficient and Theil index, show the same pattern of change in inequality in Costa Rica.

³ Another cause of the increase in inequality in hours worked was an increase in the proportion of men working over-time during this period.

28% to 29%). Further, the proportion of self-employed women increased faster during the period in which poverty was stagnating (from 1996 and 2003) than in the period in which poverty rates were falling (from 1990 and 1996).

The increase in the proportion of women working part-time occurred disproportionately among women living in poor households, contributing further to increased poverty. The proportion of women in poor households working part-time increased from 53% in 1990 to 68% in 2003, while the proportion of women in non-poor households working part-time also increased, but at a slower rate (from 40% to 47%). At the same time, the proportion of men in both poor and non-poor households working part-time fell (while the proportion working over time increased from 27% to 30% and 35% to 41%, respectively). From 1990 to 2003 the proportion of workers who were self-employed also increased fastest for poor women from poor households. The proportion of employed women from poor households working as self-employed almost doubled from 1990 to 2003, from 22% to 42% (while the proportion of employed women from non-poor households increased from 40.8% to 47.4%).

In summary, the most important cause of the increase in earnings inequality from 1996 to 2003 was an increase in the proportion of women working part-time as self-employed workers.⁴ Further, the increase in the proportion of women working part-time occurred disproportionately among women living in poor households, and as such contributing to increased poverty.

b. Increased unemployment

The puzzle of rising real average earnings but stagnating poverty is also partly explained by rising unemployment rates, especially among those most vulnerable to poverty. National unemployment rates were counter-cyclical prior to 1996; falling with the expansion from 1990 to 1994 (from 4.6% to 3.5%) and then rising during the recession from 1994 to 1996 (to above 6% in 1996). However, despite rising GDP per capita and rising average real earnings and incomes after 1996, unemployment rates remained high (6% to 6.5%) until 2003.

⁴ According to Gindling and Trejos (2005), other labor market phenomena that contributed to the increase in earnings inequality include: an increase in the male-female wage gap, increasing returns to education, and increased inequality in education levels among workers.

The pattern of high and rising unemployment rates during the period of earnings growth but stagnating poverty is especially marked for those living in poor households. Figure 5 shows that, while unemployment rates for those living in non-poor households remained slightly less than 5% for the entire 1996-2003 expansionary period, unemployment rates increased steadily and dramatically for those living in poor households over this same period. For those living in poor households, unemployment rates increased from below 13.6% in 1996 to 16.7% in 2003. For those in extreme poverty, unemployment rates more than doubled during this period, from 16.3% to 27.1%.

Our analysis of the data suggests that the explanation for the higher unemployment rates differed between men and women. Higher unemployment rates for women are driven by increases in labor force participation rates, while higher unemployment rates for men are related to changes in the demand for labor. From 1990 to 2003, labor force participation rates increase for women and decrease for men (figure 6). Labor force participation rates for women changed very little from 1987 to 1996, and then increase from 1996 to 2003 (coincident with the period of rapid income growth but stagnating poverty). Increasing labor force participation rates for women suggest that high and rising unemployment rates were, at least in part, a supply-driven phenomenon. Specifically, we hypothesize that even if demand for labor and employment were increasing, employment was not able to increase fast enough to keep up with the increasing labor force participation of women.

To provide additional evidence regarding this hypothesis, we use a technique developed in Card and Riddell (1993) to decompose the increase in unemployment rates (which began in 1994) into three components: (1) changes in the non-employment rate (unemployment plus labor force non-participation as a proportion of the population over 12 years old), (2) changes in the probability of unemployment given non-employment (unemployment plus labor force non-participation), and (3) changes in labor force participation rates. The last two components of this decomposition are related to increases in labor force participation rates, while the first is related to changes in the demand for labor.

Formally, let $P(U|LF)$ represent the probability of unemployment given labor force participation (the unemployment rate), let $P(N)$ represent the unconditional probability of non-employment and let $P(LF)$ equal the probability of being in the labor force. Then,

$$P(U|LF) = \frac{P(N) * P(U|N)}{P(LF)} \quad \text{EQ(1)}$$

Taking logarithms,

$$P(U|LF) = \log P(N) + \log P(U|N) - \log P(LF) \quad \text{EQ(2)}$$

Because labor force participation rates are increasing for women and falling for men, we calculate this decomposition separately for men and women. For women our calculations indicate that the increase in the unemployment rate between 1994 and 2003 can be entirely explained by higher labor force participation rates. Indeed, non-employment rates (the proportion of the working-age population either unemployed or not in the labor force) for women actually fell; indicating that if there had been no increase in labor force participation rates, unemployment rates would have fallen for women. For men, our calculations indicate that the increase in unemployment rates is explained by changes in labor demand and increases in the probability of unemployment given non-employment.⁵ In summary, the increase in unemployment among members of poor families from 1996 to 2003 was caused, in part, by an increase in labor force participation rates for women.

⁵ For women, employment as percent of the working age female population increased from 29% in 1996 to 35% in 2003. For women, the total change in the log of unemployment rates between 1994 and 2003 was 0.35, of which the contribution of changes in non-employment rates was -0.8, while the contribution of changes related to changes in labor force participation (components 2 plus 3) was 0.43. For men, the total change in the log of unemployment rates between 1994 and 2003 was 0.52, of which the contribution of changes in non-employment rates was 0.13, the contribution of changes in the probability of being unemployed given non-employment was 0.37, and the contribution of changes in labor force participation rates was .02..

III. Changes in Family Structure

In the last section, we identified the following explanations for stagnating poverty from 1996 to 2003 in Costa Rica despite economic growth: an increase in the proportion of working women from poor households working part-time as self-employed workers and an increase in the labor force participation rates for women in poor families, which in turn caused an increase in unemployment rates among members of poor households. In this section, we show that these labor market phenomena are related to changes in the structure of Costa Rican households. The most notable change in the structure of Costa Rican households is an increase in the proportion of female-headed households, which increased from 18.0% of all households in 1990 to 25.5% in 2003, and the related decline in "traditional" two-parent male headed households (from 61.6% of all households in 1990 to 49.6% in 2003, see table 1). The most rapid increase in the proportion of female-headed households occurred during the period when poverty rates were stagnating despite economic growth; from 1996 to 2003 the proportion of households headed by women increased from 20.7% to 25.5% (as opposed to an increase of only 3.1 percentage points from 1990 to 1996). Further, in the 1990s it became increasingly likely that a poor household was a female-headed household; the proportion of poor households headed by women increased from 20.4% of poor households in 1990 to 33.0% in 2003 (table 1). The proportion of female-headed households among the non-poor also increased in this period, although the increase is smaller (from 17.2% to 23.4% of non-poor households).

In an analysis of the relationship between family structure and poverty, it is important to distinguish female headed households headed by single mothers from female headed households without children. In the aggregate, female household heads are not necessarily poorer than male household heads. For example, ECLAC (2003) finds no systematic difference in poverty rates for male and female headed households in Latin America. Some female headed households are less likely to be poor than the average household, such as the increasing number of economically independent young women in Latin America who are reported as female-headed households (ECLAC 2004).⁶ On the

⁶ Slon and Zúniga (2006), using a panel data set of household heads constructed from the 2000-2002 Costa Rican Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes, find that the probability of exiting poverty is lower for

other hand, poverty rates for households with children that are headed by single mothers are higher than for any other family type in almost all Latin American countries (ECLAC 2004). As we can see from table 1, this is also true in Costa Rica--among family types poverty rates are highest for single female headed households with children.

Female headed households in Costa Rica are overwhelmingly single parent households (table 1).⁷ The typical female headed household is a single parent household with children (while the typical male headed household is a two parent household with children). As we can also see from table 1, the proportion of poor households headed by single mothers in Costa Rica increased from 13.4% in 1990 to 16.8% in 1996 to 22.5% in 2003. During the period when incomes were growing but poverty was stagnant (1996-2003) single mother headed households were the only type of household that increased their poverty share. The increase in the number of single mother households in poverty was not due to an increase in poverty rates among such households, which remained steady (and even fell slightly), but rather to an increase in the proportion of such households in the population in general. The proportion households headed by single mothers increased from 11.5% in 1996 to 13.5% in 2003 (after remaining relatively steady from 1990 to 1996).

The increase in single mother headed households contributed to stagnating poverty rates during this period directly because such households are more likely to be poor than other types of households. Single mother headed households are more likely to be poor than other households, in part, because single mothers are more likely than others to earn low wages. Table 2 presents the characteristics of poor and non-poor female headed single parent households with children. Comparing single mothers with male heads of “traditional” two parent families (table 3) shows that poor single mothers are more likely to be unemployed, more likely to work part-time and more likely to work as self-employed workers; labor market phenomenon that we have identified as causes of the increase in inequality and stagnating poverty in the 1996-2003 period. Compared to non-poor female household heads, poor female household heads are more likely to

female-headed households than for male-headed households, and that the probability that a non-poor household becomes poor is higher for female-headed households than for male headed households (after controlling for other factors that affect transitions into and out of poverty).

⁷ We define a single-parent household is one where, according to the Household Surveys of Multiple Purposes, neither a spouse (*esposo*) nor companion (*compañero*) is present.

participate in the labor force, have higher levels of unemployment, are more likely to work part-time and are more likely to work as self-employed workers (table 2).

Further, between 1996 and 2003 (when poverty rates stagnated despite economic growth) labor force participation, unemployment, part-time work and self-employment become more prevalent in families headed by poor single mothers. For example, table 4 shows that, among the poor, almost all new female labor force participants came from households headed by single mothers; the proportion of poor female labor force participants living in households headed by single mothers increased from 36.4% in 1990 to 48.3% in 2003 (while the proportion of poor female labor force participants living in male-headed households and in female-headed households without children decreased). In addition, from 1996 to 2003 the proportion of poor single female household heads with children who worked part time increased from 58.1% to 66.9%, the proportion working in as self-employed workers increased from 49.6% to 51.8%, unemployment rates increased from 5.2% to 9.0%, and labor force participation increased from 41.8% to 52.8% (table 2). On the other hand, during the same period, among male headed two parent households labor force participation rates and the proportion working part time fell. While unemployment rates and self-employment rates rose among male household heads of two parent families, the increase was not as great as among single mothers (comparing tables 2 and 3). For single mothers in non-poor households, from 1996 to 2003 the proportion who worked part time also increased, from 36.8% to 45.7%, the proportion working in as self employed workers increased from 19.2% to over 25.4%, and unemployment rates decreased from 2.7% to 2.1% (table 2).

In summary, the evidence suggests that the increase in the proportion of female single parent households with children can help explain the labor market phenomenon (higher labor force participation rates, higher unemployment rates and more part-time workers in the self employed sector) that contributed to stagnating poverty rates and higher earnings inequality in Costa Rica. Unfortunately, the Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes do not allow us to identify the underlying sociological causes of the increase in female headed households with children. For example, we cannot tell whether these are women who have never been married, were married but have been

divorced or widowed, or who have lived in *union libres* but no longer have another adult living in the household. This is an important focus of future research.⁸

V. Conclusions and Policy Implications

The period when poverty rates stagnated in Costa Rica despite growing average real earnings and incomes coincided with a period of a large increase in the proportion of households headed by women, and an even larger increase in the proportion of poor households headed by single mothers. Because households headed by single mothers are more likely to be poor than any other type of household, the increase in the proportion of households headed by single mothers, by itself, increased poverty rates. The evidence is also consistent with the story that these mothers, new entrants to the labor force, were unable or unwilling to find full-time work in the high-paying formal sector, and ended up unemployed or working part-time as self-employed workers. These labor market phenomena, in turn, contributed to increased inequality, increased unemployment, and low incomes for households vulnerable to poverty.

Our results suggests that many poor women in Costa Rica are single mothers who presumably have the sole responsibility for child care, which may make it difficult to work standard working hours in the formal sector. Policies that would make it easier for

⁸ The proportion of female single parent households without children also increased from 1987 to 2004 (although at a slower rate than the increase in female single parent households with children). These women are older and less likely to be labor market participants than female household heads with children and male household heads of "traditional" two-parent families; more than 65% are aged 65 years or older, while less than 10% are labor force participants. This suggests that these are older women who do not have access to the pensions of a spouse. Unfortunately, the household surveys do not allow us to identify whether these are women who were never married, who divorced, or whose husbands have died.

From 1996 to 2003 there was also an increase in the proportion of wives in male-headed households who entered the labor force. From 1996 to 2003 an increasing percentage of wives living in poor households with children entered the labor force (the proportion increased from 11.5% to 13.5%). For wives from poor households, both employment rates and unemployment rates (as a percent of the population) increased. Among those employed, there was an increase in wives from poor families working part-time and as self-employed workers. While the increase in the proportion of households with working wives can help explain the increase in part-time and self-employed workers, it cannot help explain stagnating poverty rates because having two income earners in a household generally lowers the probability that a household is in poverty. Indeed, there is some evidence that the increase in the labor force participation rates of wives in two-parent families led to less poverty; the proportion of households with working spouses in Costa Rica increased more among non-poor households than among poor households (the proportion of poor male-headed households with an employed spouse increased from 6.7% in 1996 to 12.8% in 2003, while the proportion of non-poor male headed households with an employed spouse increased from 24.4% in 1996 to 32.2% in 2003).

single mothers to obtain and keep full-time work in the higher-paying formal sector could help to reduce poverty rates in Costa Rica. Expanding the possibilities for child care for poor families during normal working hours would make it easier for poor single mothers to obtain high-paying full-time work. Public policies to expand access to child care might include: expand government subsidies to poor families for child care, provide after and before school child care programs in schools, and encourage private firms to provide subsidized day care facilities at work. Trejos (2006) describes existing programs in this area in Costa Rica, such as the Ministry of Health Program of *Centros Infantiles* and the IMAS program *Oportunidades de Atención a la Niñez*. He makes the points that existing programs cover a very small proportion of the poor families who need child care, and that the small amount of spending on these programs has actually been falling since 2000. Also, these programs are only for preschool-aged children. For school-aged children, the Ministry of Education runs programs that make it easier to keep children in school, such as free lunch and financial help for transport, uniforms, supplies, etc. However, there are no after school child care programs for children who are older than preschool age. This can leave a big gap in the work day because many Costa Rican public schools have two sessions per day, so that a given child will be in school only in the afternoon or morning, and will require child care for the other half of the work day.

Our results suggest that Costa Rica should reduce legal barriers to women who would like to work non-standard work hours. For example, current Costa Rican legislation limits the ability of employers to employ women at night. This legislation may force women interested in part-time or night work into the lower paying informal sector.

Lastly, our results suggest that the Costa Rican government enact policies to provide single mothers with the skills and other resources necessary to find and keep well-paid employment. Poor single female household heads have very low skills compared to other Costa Rican workers. This suggests that programs designed to increase the skills of single mothers could contribute to reducing poverty in Costa Rica. One such set of policies would make it easier for women (particularly younger single mothers) to complete more formal education. Another set of policies would provide training for adult single mothers. Current non-targeted Costa Rican government training (*capacitación*) programs include training programs run through the *Nacional de Parendizajo (INA)*,

Instituto de Desarrollo Agrario (IDA) and Consejo Nacional de Producción (CNP). In addition, the IMAS administers training programs targeted towards the poor (especially female household heads). Our results suggest the government expand these programs targeted towards providing training for poor women.

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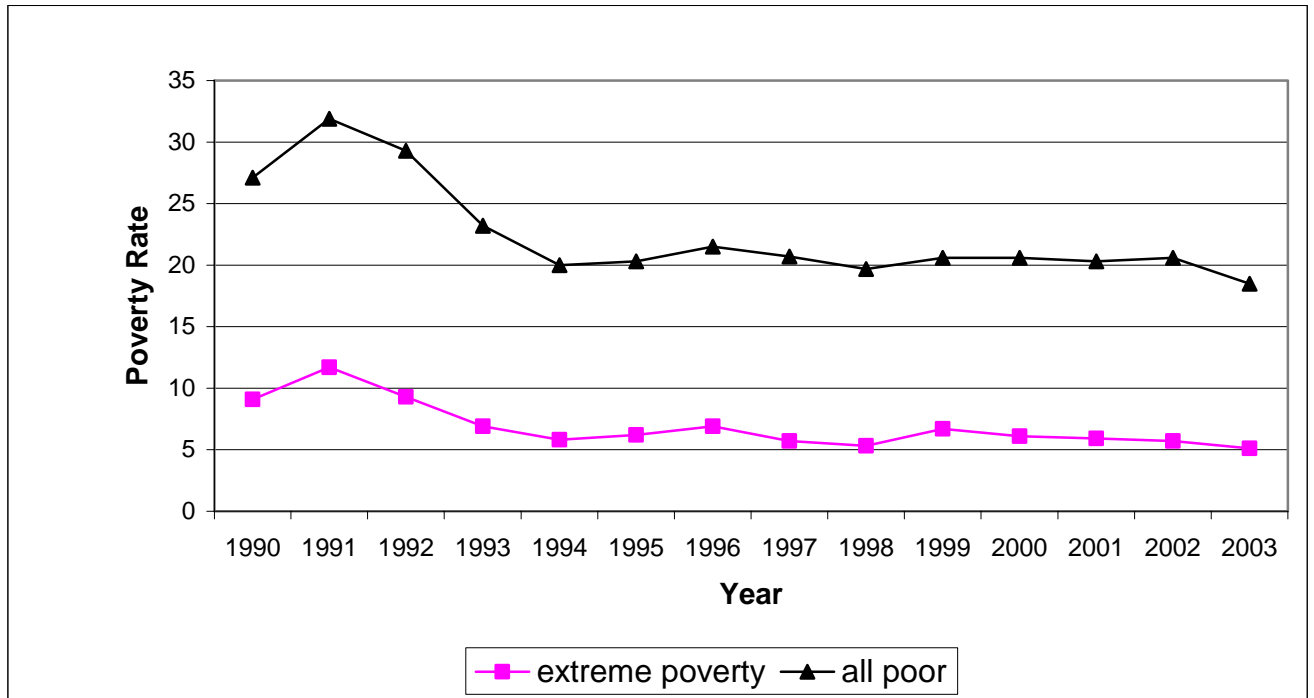
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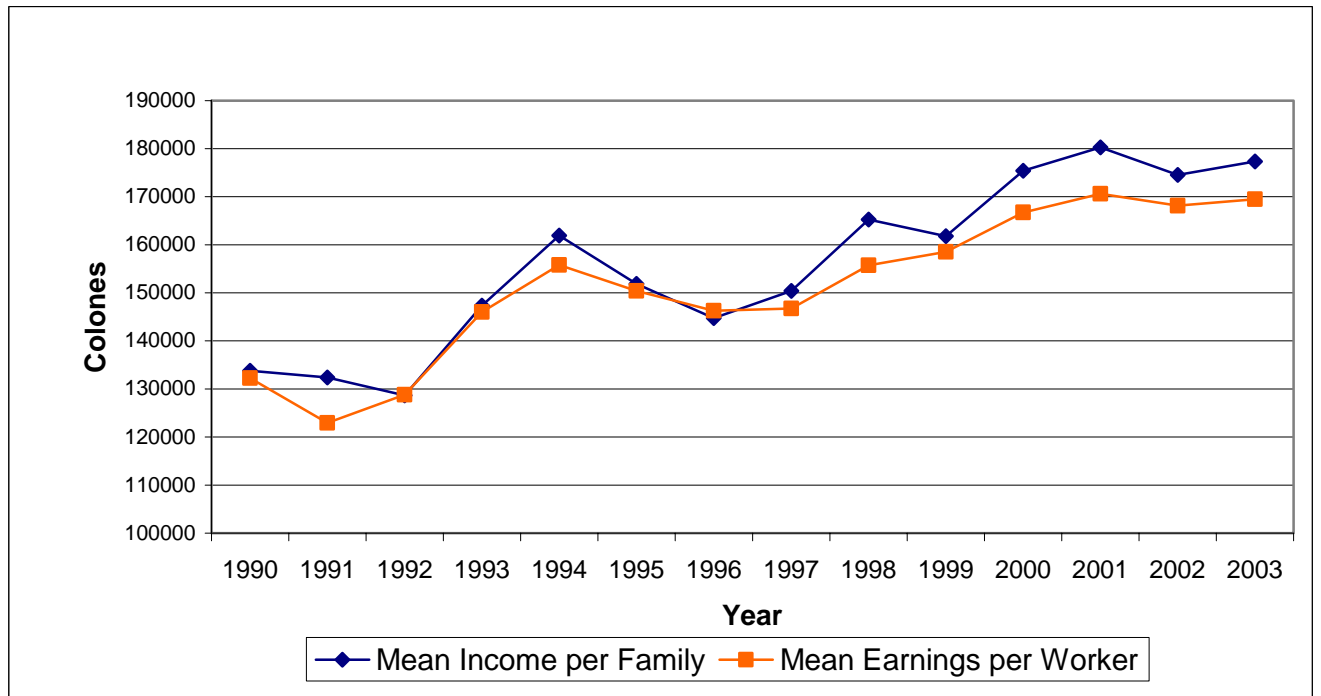
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Figure 1: Poverty and Extreme Poverty Rates, 1990-2003



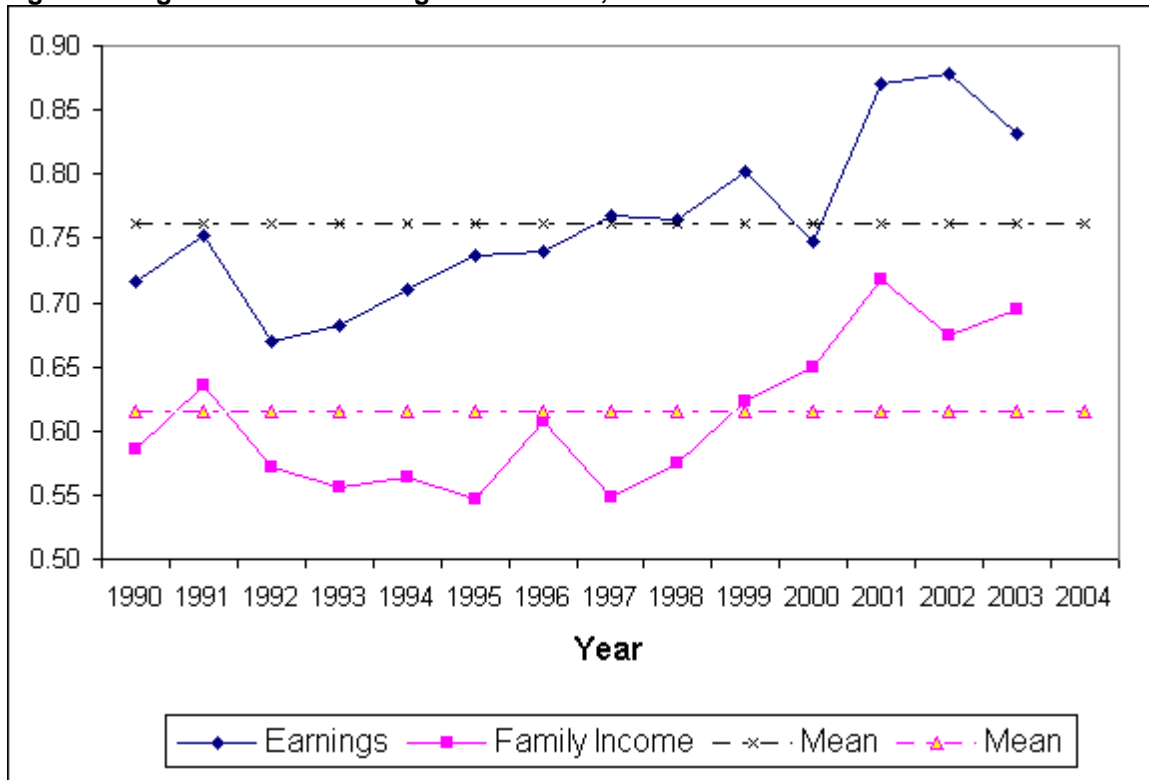
Source: Estado de la Nacion, Costa Rica, 2006, www.estadonacion.or.cr

**Figure 2: Real Mean Monthly Family Income and Individual Earnings, 1990-2003
(1999 colones)**



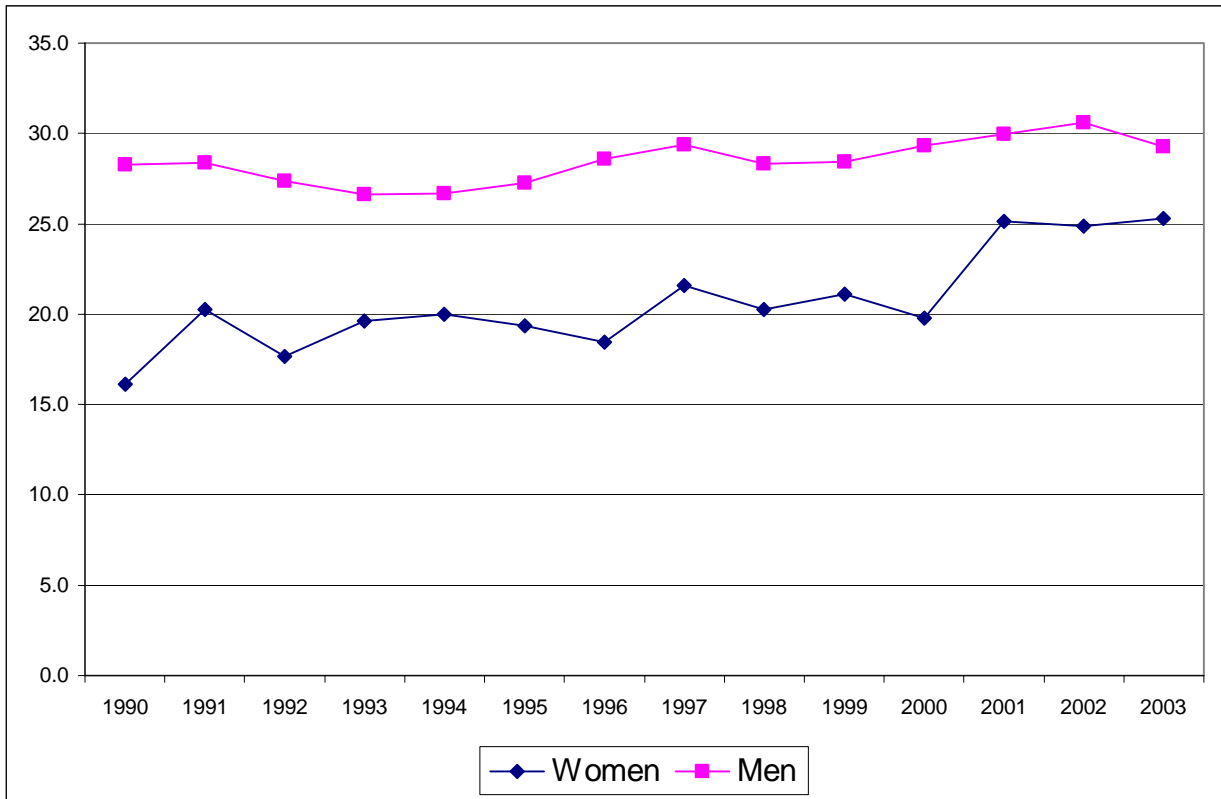
Source: Estado de la Nacion, Costa Rica, 2006, www.estadonacion.or.cr

Figure 3: Log Variance of Earnings and Income, 1990-2003



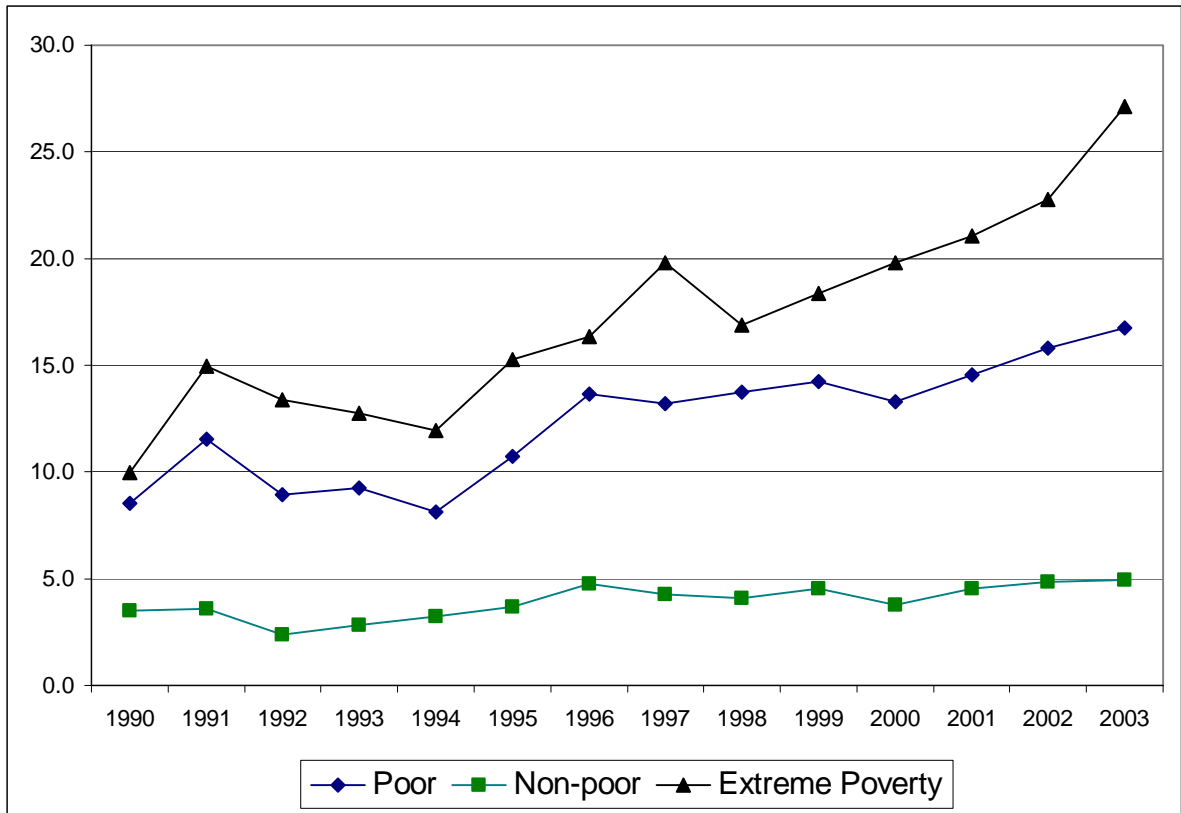
Source: Author's calculations from the Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes, 1990-2003

Figure 4: Percent of Self-employed Workers, by Gender, 1990-2003



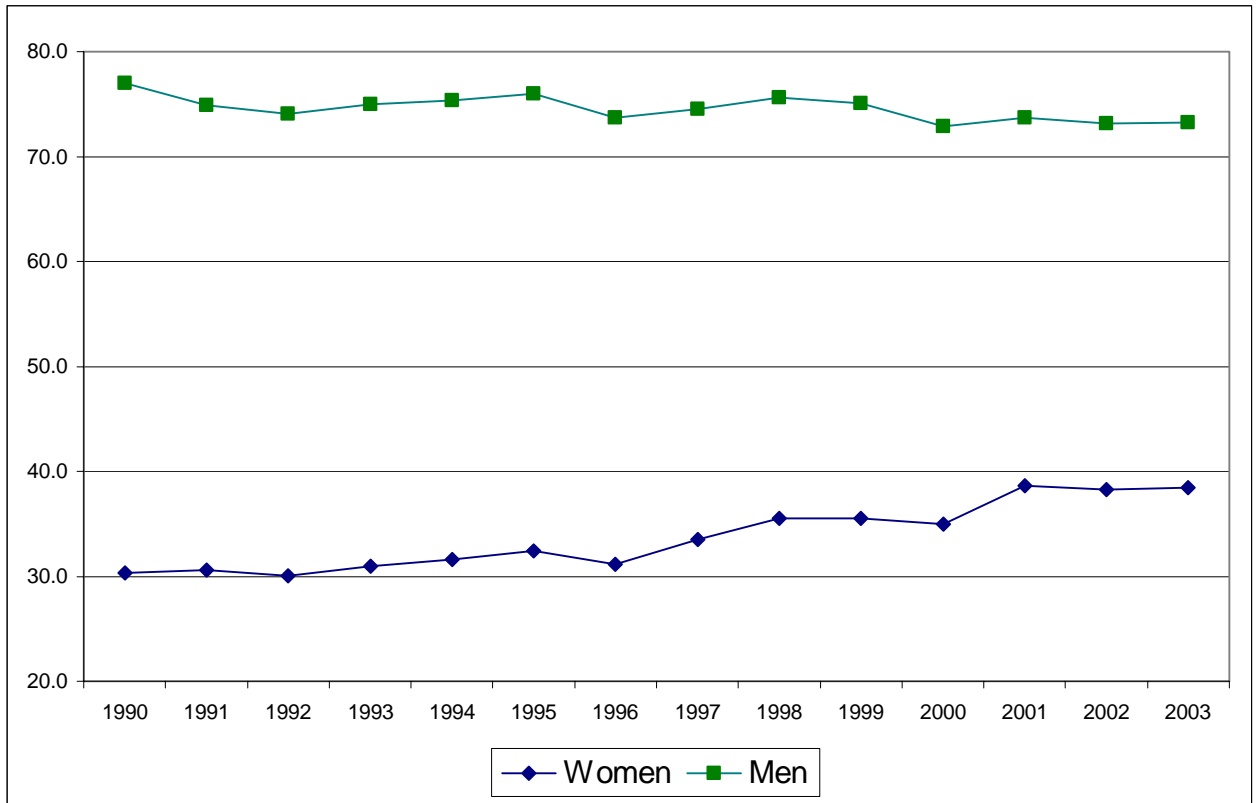
Source: Author's calculations from the Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes, 1990-2003

Figure 5: Unemployment Rates, by Poverty Status, 1990-2003



Source: Author's calculations from the Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes, 1990-2003

Figure 6: Labor Force Participation Rates, by Gender, 1990-2003



Source: Author's calculations from the Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes, 1990-2003

Table 1: Family Structure and Poverty, 1990, 1996 and 2003

	1990	1996	2003
% of All Households Headed By:			
Female Household Heads	18.0	20.7	25.5
Spouse Not Present and Children (<=18)	11.0	11.5	13.5
Spouse Not Present and No Children	6.2	7.8	9.2
Spouse Present and Children (<=18)	0.6	0.9	1.9
Spouse Present and No Children	0.2	0.4	0.9
Male Household Heads	82.0	79.3	74.5
Spouse Not Present and Children (<=18)	1.7	1.7	1.7
Spouse Not Present and No Children	5.1	5.7	6.8
Spouse Present and Children (<18)	61.6	56.6	49.6
Spouse Present and No Children	13.6	15.3	16.3
% of Poor Households Headed By:			
Female Household Heads	20.4	26.5	33.0
Spouse Not Present and Children (<=18)	13.4	16.8	22.5
Spouse Not Present and No Children	6.5	8.1	7.9
Spouse Present and Children (<=18)	0.3	1.3	1.7
Spouse Present and No Children	0.1	0.3	0.9
Male Household Heads	79.6	73.7	67.1
Spouse Not Present and Children (<=18)	1.8	1.4	2.0
Spouse Not Present and No Children	2.9	4.4	4.4
Spouse Present and Children (<18)	65.2	57.0	50.7
Spouse Present and No Children	9.2	10.7	9.9
% Poor (Poverty Rates) for the Following Households:	27.1	21.5	18.5
Female Household Heads	30.6	27.5	24.0
Spouse Not Present and Children (<=18)	32.9	31.5	30.9
Spouse Not Present and No Children	28.3	22.1	16.0
Spouse Present and Children (<=18)	14.3	29.6	16.1
Spouse Present and No Children	15.0	14.2	17.1
Male Household Heads	26.3	20.0	16.7
Spouse Not Present and Children (<=18)	28.0	17.9	22.6
Spouse Not Present and No Children	15.6	16.5	11.9
Spouse Present and Children (<18)	28.7	21.6	18.9
Spouse Present and No Children	18.5	15.0	11.2

Source: Author's calculations from the Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes

Table 2: Characteristics of Female Household Heads, With Children (<=18) and Spouse Not Present, by Poverty Status, 1990, 1996 and 2003

	Poor Households			Non-Poor Households		
	1990	1996	2003	1990	1996	2003
Age Distribution--(% of Household Heads)						
12-29 years old	10.3	8.0	11.2	8.5	8.3	10.1
30-39 years old	29.3	31.2	31.7	29.3	28.5	24.0
40-49 years old	23.7	26.5	30.6	26.8	33.3	39.2
50-64 years old	24.5	21.3	14.2	26.1	20.0	20.6
65 years of older	12.2	13.0	12.3	9.3	9.8	6.0
% Living in Urban Areas	56.9	46.4	62.0	55.3	52.1	66.4
For Household Heads:						
Mean Years of Education	4.3	5.0	5.3	6.7	7.6	8.5
% With Less Than a Completed Secondary School Education	94.8	92.7	90.2	76.9	70.5	63.7
Labor Force Participation Rate	41.8	41.8	52.8	57.4	68.3	72.4
Unemployment Rate	9.0	12.5	17.0	2.5	3.9	2.9
% Unemployed	3.8	5.2	9.0	1.4	2.7	2.1
% Employed	38.1	36.6	43.9	56.0	65.6	70.3
% of Employed Household Heads Working:						
Part-time	71.1	58.1	66.9	34.6	36.8	45.7
Full-time (40-48 hours per week)	15.4	14.8	20.4	39.2	36.3	27.1
Over-time	13.6	27.0	12.7	26.1	26.8	27.2
% Employed Household Heads Working in:						
Self-Employment (cuenta propia o patrono)	31.4	49.6	51.8	21.9	19.2	25.4
Salaried Employment (asalariados)	68.0	50.4	49.2	77.8	80.8	74.4

Source: Author's calculations from the Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes

Table 3: Characteristics of Male Household Heads, With Children (<=18) and Spouse Present, by Poverty Status, 1990, 1996 and 2003

	Poor Households			Non-Poor Households		
	1990	1996	2003	1990	1996	2003
Age Distribution--(% of Household Heads)						
12-29 years old	19.1	11.5	13.2	19.4	18.4	14.0
30-39 years old	37.6	39.5	36.6	38.3	35.3	33.8
40-49 years old	21.4	25.5	27.1	23.6	26.7	32.0
50-64 years old	14.8	15.7	15.3	15.1	15.8	16.9
65 years of older	7.1	7.7	7.8	3.6	3.8	3.3
% Living in Urban Areas	37.2	30.3	42.2	45.3	44.0	57.0
For Household Heads:						
Mean Years of Education	4.9	5.2	5.4	7.7	7.9	8.4
% With Less Than a Completed Secondary School Education	93.7	93.1	90.8	69.9	70.8	66.8
Labor Force Participation Rate	89.6	89.4	89.8	94.5	94.7	95.8
Unemployment Rate	1.5	3.7	5.6	0.5	1.3	0.6
% Unemployed	1.4	3.3	5.1	0.5	1.3	0.6
% Employed	88.3	86.2	84.7	94.1	93.4	95.2
% of Employed Household Heads Working:						
Part-time	36.8	38.2	35.8	20.0	21.3	18.6
Full-time (40-48 hours per week)	32.5	28.7	27.8	40.3	33.5	33.4
Over-time	30.7	33.1	36.4	39.7	45.2	48.0
% Employed Household Heads Working in:						
Self-Employment (cuenta propia o patrono)	36.0	38.2	42.7	26.4	30.6	30.9
Salaried Employment (asalariados)	63.6	61.8	57.2	73.5	69.3	69.0

Source: Author's calculations from the Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes

**Table 4: Family Structure and Labor Force Participation of Women Living in Poor Households
Percent of the Female Labor Force Living in Each Type of Household, 1990, 1996 and 2003**

	Poor Households		
	1990	1996	2003
Female Household Heads	42.6	50.3	54.4
Spouse Not Present and Children (<=18)	36.4	40.8	48.3
Spouse Not Present and No Children	5.3	5.1	2.9
Spouse Present and Children (<=18)	0.7	3.9	2.6
Spouse Present and No Children	0.2	0.5	0.6
Male Household Heads	57.4	49.7	45.6
Spouse Not Present and Children (<=18)	1.7	1.1	1.5
Spouse Not Present and No Children	0.1	0.0	0.4
Spouse Present and Children (<18)	52.0	46.6	39.9
Spouse Present and No Children	3.6	2.1	3.9
SUM	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's calculations from the Household Surveys for Multiple Purposes