

THEY HAVE LEFT US BEHIND.

Poor people in Mexico in COVID19 crisis.



Platform against inequality in COVID19 crisis in México.
April 29, 2020.

In Mexico, inequality conditions disproportionately affect specific social groups, in which poverty is concentrated: women, girls and boys, indigenous people, elders, people with disabilities, migrants and other groups that, like these, are marginalized, discriminated against and systematically expelled from access to opportunities and exercise of rights. Even with a job, most of those who belong to these groups remain in poverty.

The COVID19 crisis has exacerbated these inequalities and aggravated the conditions in which these groups live¹. Due to the economic impacts of the emergency, the poor of Mexico are today poorer and 21 million people who were not poor before the crisis are at imminent risk of falling into poverty². This risk increases dramatically due to the lack of social protection systems and the absence of effective and timely economic measures by the authorities to mitigate the impacts of the crisis.

68 million Mexicans live in households whose main source of income is highly fragile in the face of this crisis³. According to the testimonies collected in this work, household income has been reduced to between 50 and 100%, and with it many have fallen below the extreme poverty line⁴. Cash transfers have not been sufficient or have not arrived in time to compensate for this reduction. In response, poor households have become indebted, have lost their meager assets, have run out of reserves, have squandered their assets to buy food, have stopped studying and preparing themselves, have stopped eating. The poor of Mexico in the face of the crisis feel sad, desperate and abandoned.

Statistical and geographic information is not yet available to accurately determine the impact of the COVID19 crisis on the most vulnerable communities and groups. To give us an idea of its current state we depend on surveys, estimates and projections; from the work of journalists, and from reports from volunteers who are providing support in the field. But the most important voices are those of who experience the crisis first hand from poverty.

The following texts are testimonies collected from indigenous people, domestic workers, itinerant workers, migrants, inhabitants of popular settlements, women, older adults, independent professionals and the unemployed, as part of the **#NecesitamosEscucharlos** “#We need to hear each other out” campaign, because their voices have been silenced by poverty and muted by the pandemic. These voices of the poor in Mexico today are claiming: **They said we would go first, but they have left us behind.**

¹ https://www.coneval.org.mx/Medicion/MP/Paginas/Pobreza_2016.aspx

² https://ceey.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/300220-Comunicado_ceey_planCOVID.pdf

³ <https://www.animalpolitico.com/intuiciones-y-evidencia/la-pandemia-como-un-nuevo-motor-de-desigualdad/>

⁴ FinnSalud survey shows that 62% of people in Mexico report a decrease in their incomes, <https://bfglobal.com/insight-type/blogs/el-covid-19-ya-esta-danando-la-salud-financiera-de-los-mexicanos/>

INDIGENOUS AND RURAL WORKERS

“It is difficult, we feel that little by little the issue is becoming more complicated in rural communities. In the city there is movement and access, but in the communities there are community agreements not to let anyone in or out. With the issue of the dismissal of workers who are out of state, many are returning to their communities and in some they are not allowing them to enter; (They are) people who come from beaches, from the United States, from Tijuana. In some regions that are not producers, who are merchants, the subject of the economy sticks a little more, because their daily income is paralyzed. Commodities are becoming more expensive, everything goes up, beans, rice, the basics for food. There are people who are taking advantage of the need of the people and the things that are happening.”

**Member of OCEZ-CNPA.
Chiapas Frontier Region.**

“Coronavirus disease has brought many consequences because many people who have gone to work in other states stopped sending money and returned to the community. Another problem that it brought is that the prices of products, such as sugar, salt, soap, among others, rose. At least we have the benefit of being able to produce our own food and we don't have to buy any.”

Maya Tseltal agricultor from *Coalición Indígena de Migrantes de Chiapas*.



Photo: Payxail Yajaw Konob' Akateko.

“The cost of all things is rising, and so is the limitation on the entry of consumption. Transporting consumption to other colleagues is also being prohibited, but for companies there is freedom to transport food. Right now there is a shortage of necessary food for the population. There is a huge concern because everyone who is abroad is returning, and the problem is that we don't know if they are infected or not. Neither the mayor or the states know how to coordinate on what they are going to do and right now there is no one who is guiding (about) what is going to happen. Here people are wallowing for food.”

Member of *Gobierno Ancestral Plurinacional*. Border region between Guatemala-México.

INDIGENOUS AND RURAL WORKERS

“Right now, one of the situations that is alarming the population the most, is the issue of deportations; we see that there is little capacity of the institutions to deal with this situation. At border points, it is no longer the police or the military who are controlling the comrades who come from the south, from Honduras, El Salvador; it is the same population in order to protect themselves. Health personnel have been denouncing the limited capacity they have due to the insufficient resources that the government are giving. The issue of price increases is what we are seeing, and if the situation continues like this, the population will have to find their own ways of how to get out of this.”

**Member of *Gobierno Ancestral Plurinacional*.
Border region between Guatemala-México.**



Photo: Perimetral Press.

“Bringing food to the table is difficult. In addition to domestic work, they do the work of teaching their children, doing homework online, which they do not have access to at home. Some indigenous mothers do not speak Spanish well, they cannot read and write, so the education of their children is at risk. We depend on an informal job, selling crafts. We continue working, but we cannot sell. We do not have social security. For families with 3 to 5 children it is even harder. They have not been able to pass the requirements for the credits announced by the government. We are missing information in the indigenous language, and what is available is accessible only by mobile devices.”

Migrant indigenous merchant.

<https://perimetral.press/indigenas-migrantes-las-que-no-se-pueden-quedar-en-casa/>

"It is impossible for the indigenous people of northern Jalisco to use the water that they have access to to wash their hands twenty times, as suggested by the health authorities, since it is of poor quality and insufficient. We hardly have water to drink, it is impossible to have enough to wash our hands. We have received no information or care in the ten northern municipalities, where the elderly - the wise - are most at risk. Few people are voicing the economic impacts and rising prices. People are scared because we hardly have a health clinic. It is an urgent call and it is necessary to inform indigenous peoples, and that we are not left behind. We are the least informed, most forgotten, and we urgently need adequate information."

Tamina. San Sebastián Teponahuatlán, Mezquitic.

<https://perimetral.press/con-agua-escasa-y-de-mala-calidad-wixarrikas-y-tepehuanos->

"Indigenous people from Guerrero, Chiapas, Morelos and Oaxaca

who live daily in crisis due to quarantine, are invisible to the authorities. Azucena is Nahua, a single mother of 3 children. She cannot read or write, so she has not been able to request government support. She owes two months of rent, she spent her savings and she doesn't know how she will get ahead. You can ask for a loan but you are afraid of getting into debt. The pantry she received from DIF was out of date, her 3 children became ill and she had to take them to the doctor.

<https://perimetral.press/migrantes-artesanas-ante-la-pandemia-las-que-lo-pierden-todo/>

RURAL POPULATIONS

“Puzzled, we can't go out like we did before. We are not accustomed. We have been affected in the business, we don't sell as before. It has had an impact on our economy. To survive we are making shorter meals, we eat less at home so that it does not affect us as much in our economy.

We would like support that we know has been done in other states, and we need it here in Jalisco; not so much in money but in products, because things have been spoiled in the store and we have struggled.”

Merchant of a small business, grocery store. Rural zone in western Mexico.



Photo: Edgar Moreno.

"I feel bad. We do not see children playing in the street, the streets are very lonely. (I wish) That the pandemic has passed so that the commerce can be seen again, and that children can play and smile because there is a lot of sadness because there is no work.”

Merchant of a small business, drug store. Rural zone in western Mexico.



Photo: Edgar Moreno.

"Sad, desperate for the situation in which we live, since there are no people, people do not go out, they do not buy, they do not spend, so the truth is that we did very badly and our sales dropped a lot. We need other businesses to start opening, with all the security measures, so that people are not afraid and there is a flow of people and that the economy can move, and obviously some support from the government.”

Merchant of a small business, *fonda*. Rural zone in western Mexico.

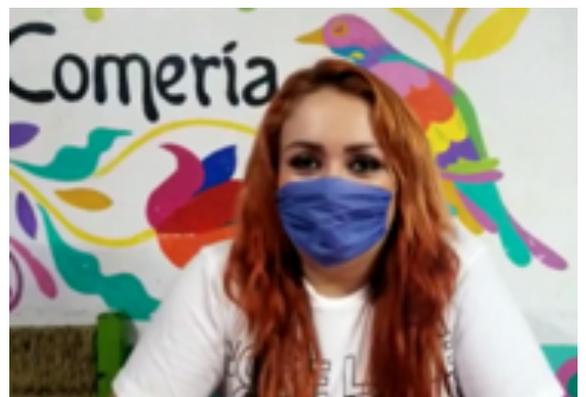


Photo: Edgar Moreno.

URBAN STREET WORKERS

"They are running out of food or rationing the food, because it is no longer enough. They were already struggling because they live from the street, they pay a room a day and therefore the problem has already become one of food and shelter. Before they even ate from the garbage; right now not even the garbage has any food, because there are no people. Before, they would give them what was left over in a small restaurant, but right now everything is closed. We have delivered some pantries, but we have more than 500 families written down, and it is not enough to cover the need."

Otilia. Coordinator of Amigos Trabajando en los Cruceros.

"Those of us who work on the street have seen the way of subsistence seriously diminished by the Covid 19 pandemic. Many of us who work on the streets are elders with chronic illnesses such as diabetes or hypertension and we usually live in conditions in which it is difficult to maintain a healthy distance between us (to avoid contagion), some of us lack potable drinking water to wash our hands. In case of falling ill, the chances of infecting other people are high and few of us are beneficiaries of the health systems."

"As the contingency extended, more and more people have come to ask for help and the food is no longer enough. Unfortunately in the coming days and weeks the situation will become more acute, and with it, the risk for people who go out in search of food. We ask the government to expedite and intensify the strategy to serve this vulnerable population."



Photo: Mariana Espeleta.

"The breakfasts of the *Jalisco Sin Hambre* (without hunger) program granted by the DIF are not enough because only one member of the family can be trained and receive two rations, even if their family is larger than that. Unfortunately in the coming days and weeks the situation will become more acute, and with it the risk for people who go out in search of food. We ask the state and municipal governments to speed up and intensify the strategy to serve this vulnerable population, and that delivery is not conditioned to the presentation of documents such as INE and proof of residence, since many people in dire need do not have these papers. We also ask the private initiative, universities, citizens and organizations, to help in these difficult times. We need non-perishable food, donations of medications, chlorine, disinfectant gel and face masks."

Amigos Trabajando en los Cruceros.

WORKERS IN INFORMAL OR STREET SITUATIONS

“At most we get 100 or 150 pesos. I pay 80 pesos for the room. Sometimes I give up a meal, sometimes. For 20 years I have never battled as much as I do now. Yesterday my blood pressure went alarmingly up. Lack of food is the main issue, I am desperate, but here we are.”

María, wiper washer.

<https://www.facebook.com/AZTECAJALISCO/videos/275067503512180/>



Photo: José Toral, Líder Informativo.

“When in Jalisco they launched the platform to make transfers to those who work in the informal sector and were left without a job, I helped several women to register. As the resources were very limited, they never gave them an appointment.”

Ana. Coordinator of support for domestic workers and informal work. Parvada.

“Every day more hungry families are asking for pantries. Jalisco's strategy has not taken off with the pantries and people are already having a very bad time. Last week we just managed to buy beans, rice and textured soybeans. Help, please if you can, help !! People who work on the street really need it. ”

Volunteer that supports street workers. Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara.

"The slowness of the bureaucracy has made sex workers despair as their work has been reduced to the 95%, which has left them with no money to send to their families and without any shelters or any protection from the government, according with the information received from sex workers from at least 16 entities. Mexico's City government's offer has been the best, along with that of the Chihuahua municipality. However, the supports have not been sufficient in relation to the extraordinary needs of these women. In the last installment, the economic resources were contributed by the Street Brigade and by private donors summoned through a collection campaign. On this occasion, there was no support from the Government of Mexico City, nor from the federal government or from any mayor's office.

Activists and founders from *Brigada Callejera*, support of sexual workers.

NEIGHBORHOODS, POPULAR SETTLEMENTS AND URBAN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Unemployed. She used to do housework. She stopped working and currently receives no income. She has a son. The suspension of work coincides with the abandonment of her husband due to a situation of violence. She is diagnosed with hypertension and prediabetes.
Araceli, 39 years old.



Photo: Sayra García.

"We are experiencing very difficult times. I receive messages every day from women who worked at home and who suspended them without pay, and who have neither food for them nor their children; they are desperate on the sales pages practically giving away their things. They sell their clothes for 3 pesos, 5 pesos. We just were able to help a child who has cancer and did not even have diapers. Oh no! I have seen merchants, men, cry on the street. I just received a message from a lady who asks me for a kilo of tortillas, because she doesn't even have to give her children a decent plate of food, with a few beans. They don't even have a single tortilla for their children. I see the face of my people here and their need, and I think, 'my God! What are we going to do? How can we help so many people?' There is no resource, there isn't... I am running out of faith; I am running out of hope when I see so many weary faces".

Mayela. Social worker. Tala municipality, Jalisco.

"Celsa spoke to me shortly after receiving her pantry. She cried several times on the call because she was very moved; because literally this pantry puts her on the other side. She will be able to start eating, because the food the neighbors gave her prioritized her for her two children. Her income is \$ 20 a week, when she manages to sell some junk [...] The scenes throughout the entire day of pantry delivery have been very strong: people queuing up in the sun for a plate of food, for a pantry or because of the super uncertain expectation of aspiring to a pantry, and although I know that the context of inequality is not unknown to us, these images come to make it even more tangible with a very concrete harshness. Our work and our agility in it makes a difference."

Fernando, volunteer in an irregular settlement.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS AND INDEPENDENT WORKERS

The comments presented in this section were retrieved from the Twitter platform in response to the question asked on April 11, 2020 by the Kittens against Inequality profile @GatitosVsDesig: “Do you already perceive quarantine and economic effects in your jobs and homes? If your answer is affirmative, tell us how they are suffering the effect and, if possible, where are they writing to us from.”

<https://twitter.com/GatitosVsDesig/status/1248981124531044353?s=20>

“My job is not taking orders (from clients), my boss sent us home with two weeks' salary because the business lives on a daily basis. In my building one of these days we will run out of water and most of my neighbors have two jobs.”

<https://twitter.com/PrincesitaRussa/status/1249018328607100928?s=20>

“No job ... no way to pay the rent ... I will let them cut the electricity and water ... my food very simple and frugal!!”

<https://twitter.com/Pippo48262734/status/1249118027997683713?s=20>

“Me and my boyfriend are Peruvians studying in Argentina. There is no way that our parents deposit money with us, we cannot return because they closed the borders. We are afraid.”

<https://twitter.com/samiyherrera/status/1249015680449630209?s=20>



“Increased insecurity, my sister has just been assaulted, my dad works on public transport, which is also affected because they have reduced the routes, my mom does house cleaning and her work rate has also decreased, luckily the company where I work still continues / Acapulco”.

https://twitter.com/TiaBrick_/status/1249023432819236865?s=20

“My husband had two employees, he had to fire one. I continue to pay the domestic worker, but now we do the chore. We pay tuition, but I teach my daughter to read at home. Also I continue with my work from home. Cuernavaca”.

<https://twitter.com/espinosacrim/status/1249040114539520001?s=20>

“I am a designer and the studio where I work continues via homeoffice. I don't think they will fire us, but the job has dropped. My boyfriend is a teacher, but he drives Uber and he has not been able to work, we are afraid of not being able to pay the car, the rent, the money is not enough”.

<https://twitter.com/heladodeuva/status/1249027791942803458?s=20>

CHILDREN

“As my mom is no longer working, I am worried and I have two grandparents, my grandfather is old and cannot see. He was going to have eye surgery, but they canceled it due to the coronavirus.”

Alexis, 10 years old. Tijuana.

<https://www.milenio.com/estados/coronavirus-tijuana-nino-juguetes-comida-ayuda-mama>



Photo: Carlos Luna. El Sol de Tijuana.

“Coronavirus can have serious consequences for girls and boys, and harm their lives in truly devastating ways. Social isolation measures mean that fathers and mothers cannot work as businesses are forced to close; traditional care providers such as schools and kindergartens have also had to close. Millions of children living in vulnerable communities will suffer serious economic and social effects from the measures required to contain the pandemic. The poorest households, including those impoverished by this crisis, will need support to survive this emergency and ensure that their most vulnerable family members such as girls, boys, people with disabilities and older adults are protected. They desperately need cash, and they need it now.” **Luke and Yolande, Coalición Global para Erradicar la Pobreza Infantil.**

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

“In the face of a pandemic, people with disabilities become more vulnerable. We ask that people with disabilities be included in the decisions made in the face of the pandemic, considering:

- Virtual classes for people with disabilities require accessible platforms.
- Children with disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, require specific foods to be fed by tube, which are not included in the food programs provided in schools for the population in poverty.
- People with autism cannot stay home for long, and need to be accompanied.

What is not named does not exist, so the disabled approach is important, it is necessary.”

Nicole. Activist for the rights of people with disabilities.

<https://perimetral.press/que-nadie-se-queda-atras-la-discapacidad-en-dias-de-pandemia/>

“I worked in 3 houses and one of my patrons paid me two extra weeks, which is what we have been using to deal with this situation. My husband has been in prison for 2 years and I am the sole support of the family. I had to stop giving the seizure medication to my daughter, who has a psycho-motor disability, because if I buy the medication, we run out of money to eat.”

Johana Karina, 39 years old. Domestic worker. Unemployed.

They are not receiving any income, there are many family members, including 3 children. One has facial paralysis and they have no resources to get it checked. She has been unemployed for a month.
María de Lourdes, 50 years old, unemployed.

HOUSEHOLD SITUATION IN MEXICO ACCORDING TO SURVEYS

Mitofsky Survey - April 27.

- Almost 3 out of 5 Mexicans declare that they only have money to cover expenses for less than 30 days by locking themselves up at home as a measure of social distancing to avoid **#COVID—19**
- 95.8% believe that the economic crisis will greatly affect our country.
- 93% consider that it will greatly affect their economy.
- The need and agreement for support programs has grown from 50.4% to 55.1% in the last month.
- 39.5% of the surveyed population has enough money for less than 15 days.

<http://actualizar.consulta.mx/index.php/encuestas-e-investigaciones/item/1348-11-encuesta-covid>

Strategic Communication Cabinet - April 15.

- 7 out of 10 Mexicans say that COVID-19 has already affected their economy.
- Of those who report having already been affected by the coronavirus and the emergency it has caused, 44% say the impact has been a great one.
- Of these economic damages, 86.5% is related to labor issues (26.2%), lower income (24.9%), general economic situation (18.6%), price increase (9.1%) and reduction of sales in stores (7.7%).

<https://politica.expansion.mx/mexico/2020/04/15/7-de-cada-10-mexicanos-dicen-que-el-covid-19-ya-afecto-su-economia>



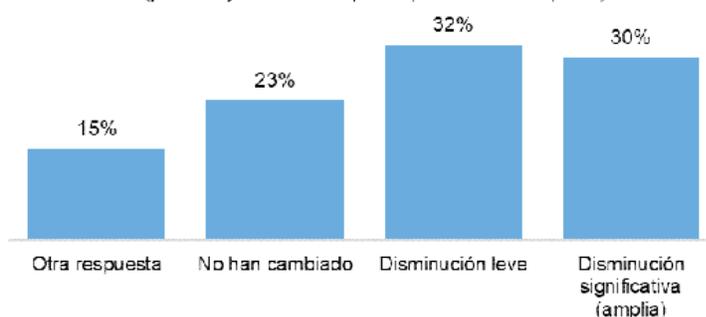
HOUSEHOLD SITUATION IN MEXICO ACCORDING TO SURVEYS

Review of the 2018 National Survey on Financial Inclusion (INEGI / CNBV) in the context of COVID.

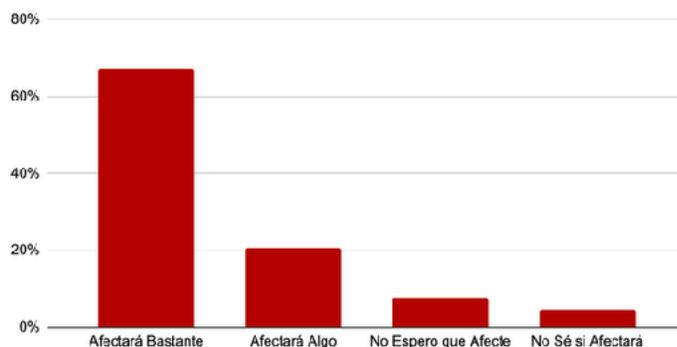
- Only 42% of Mexicans have enough savings to deal with an economic emergency equivalent to one month of their income.
- 50% of those with a fixed income could face an emergency — equivalent to one month of income — with their savings, while only 43% of those with a variable income.
- Only 35% of women in rural areas can face an economic emergency with their savings, in contrast to 50% of men in urban areas.

<https://economia.nexos.com.mx/?p=2999>

Gráfica 3. Cambio en los ingresos como resultado de la epidemia del Covid-19 (porcentaje de adultos que respondió a cada opción)



En general, ¿usted cree que la epidemia de Coronavirus afectará al bienestar financiero de su hogar?



Source: Bankable Frontier Associates, 2019. Survey of the impact of Covid-19 on financial lives.

FinnSalud - March 25 and 27, 2020.

- To cope with unanticipated expenses due to the crisis, households are using their savings by 72%; borrowing, by 31%; reducing expenses, by 15%, or selling some good, by 13%.
- The income of the surveyed households is deteriorating according to 62% of respondents.
- About 4 out of 10 could cover expenses in one to three weeks.
- Just over half of those surveyed with a loan or credit anticipate that they will not be able to pay any of their installments.
- Of the people surveyed who have a business, 71% indicated that they could not continue operating it.

<https://bfaglobal.com/insight-type/blogs/el-covid-19-ya-esta-danando-la-salud-financiera-de-los-mexicanos/>

URGENT CALL TO ACTION

According to the testimonies collected with different groups in a vulnerable condition, the response of the Government of Mexico and the coordination with local governments to protect the populations most affected by the crisis have not had the scope and opportunity required. This is also shown by multiple comparative analyzes of multilateral organizations, academia and local and international organizations in terms of the number of actions and the amount allocated in relation to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

See: <https://www.cepal.org/es/temas/covid-19>

The Covid-19 emergency has caused serious economic damages in the majority of the Mexican population. In some cases these damages have crossed critical thresholds. It is also expected that under current conditions these cases will increase, causing irreversible damage to the most vulnerable populations.

Time is a key factor since every day the capacity of households to face the crisis is diminished. Therefore, the final impact of the pandemic on Mexican households will depend on the relevance and speed with which the measures are implemented to mitigate its effects in the immediate and in the short term.

In recent weeks, multiple recommendations and initiatives have been presented to face the crisis and its profound impacts by different sectors of Mexican society; a couple of days ago, new concrete proposals from Oxfam Mexico were added⁵ and the Espinosa Yglesias-CEEY Study Center⁶. Despite this, the determined action and leadership of the Mexican State to promote a multisectoral strategy to promptly attend to the economic effects of the crisis, has been blurred by putting a long-term national transformation project at the center of the action, which today it is seriously compromised by the erosion of its economic and social base.

Those who are most affected by these patent omissions are the poor of Mexico, and with this, the stability and development of the entire country are put at risk. The deepening of the economic crisis may lead to a humanitarian crisis, and to political and social destabilization. This has been warned by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, admitting that "with the increasing economic, social and fear pressures, we have seen a shocking global rebound in violence." This is beginning to become evident in homes in Mexico, when it is observed that complaints of domestic violence, calls for help and femicides⁷ have been increasing and reaching record levels since the quarantine began⁸.

These urgent calls from the people of Mexico for aid and protection programs must be heard without further delay, because it is an ethical and moral commitment that the Mexican State and society have made to the poorest households and groups, and because there are technical and financial capabilities to respond to them. The testimonies collected in this document are proof that the poor of Mexico today feel forgotten, ignored and desperate. **For everyone's good, we must do much more for them, and do it now.**



Platform against inequality during COVID19 crisis in Mexico.
paraquedarnosencasa.org

⁵ https://www.oxfamMexico.org/sites/default/files/VIVIRALDIA_OXF_042020-FINAL_SO_0.pdf

⁶ https://ceey.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ELEMENTOS-DE-UN-PLAN-INTEGRAL-PARA-ATENDER-LAS-CONSECUENCIAS-ECONOMICAS-DE-LA-PANDEMIA-DE-COVID_compressed.pdf

⁷ <https://www.fortuneenespanol.com/health/violencia-domestica-la-otra-urgencia-de-al-en-cuarentena-por-el-covid-19/>

⁸ <https://www.jornada.com.mx/ultimas/politica/2020/04/25/primer-trimestre-de-2020-el-mas-violento-contra-las-mujeres-2332.html>