



Labor Segregation in Design: A Diagnosis of Women's Exclusion

Segregación laboral en el diseño: un diagnóstico
sobre la exclusión de las mujeres

Mónica Susana de la Barrera Medina

FIRST AUTHOR AND CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

CONCEPTUALIZATION – FORMAL ANALYSIS

FUNDING ACQUISITION – METHODOLOGY

SUPERVISION – VALIDATION – VISUALIZATION

WRITING – REVIEW

monica.delabarrera@edu.uaa.mx

Universidad Autónoma

de Aguascalientes

Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes,

México

ORCID: 0000-0003-0089-0587

Priscila Joseline Coronado Gurrola

CONCEPTUALIZATION – DATA CURATION

FUNDING ACQUISITION – INVESTIGATION

METHODOLOGY – PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

RESOURCES – SOFTWARE

priscila.coronado@uacj.mx

Universidad Autónoma

de Ciudad Juárez

Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México

ORCID: 0009-0004-7533-4897

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Abstract

Women's professional development continues to be constrained by invisible barriers linked to traditional gender constructs. These phenomena, known in the literature as the *glass ceiling* or *sticky floor*, restrict women's career growth within spaces historically designed by and for men. This article analyzes the dynamics of exclusion through a study conducted with female graphic designers who graduated from the Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes. Utilizing a diagnostic tool, participants identified the obstacles and limitations encountered throughout their professional trajectories. The findings invite profound reflection on the structures that hinder women's advancement in this discipline. Finally, the study underscores the urgency of rendering these issues visible and addressing them to foster genuine labor equity and transform contemporary work environments.

Keywords: Female graphic designers, female invisibilization, invisible barriers, labor segregation

Resumen

El desarrollo laboral de las mujeres continúa limitado por barreras invisibles asociadas a constructos de género tradicionales. Estos fenómenos, conocidos en la literatura como *techo de cristal* o *suelo pegajoso*, restringen el crecimiento profesional femenino en espacios diseñados históricamente por y para hombres. Este artículo analiza las dinámicas de exclusión mediante un estudio realizado con diseñadoras gráficas egresadas de la Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes. A través de una herramienta diagnóstica, las participantes identificaron los obstáculos y limitantes que han enfrentado a lo largo de sus trayectorias profesionales. Los resultados invitan a una reflexión profunda sobre las estructuras que frenan el avance de las mujeres en esta disciplina. Finalmente, el texto subraya la urgencia de visibilizar y abordar estas problemáticas para impulsar una verdadera equidad laboral y transformar los entornos de trabajo contemporáneos.

Palabras clave: Diseñadoras gráficas, invisibilización femenina, barreras invisibles, segregación laboral

Introduction *Obstacles to Women's career development*

Following the incorporation of women into the public sphere and the gradual abandonment of certain stereotypes, women began to enter the formal workforce. Nevertheless, many of their activities continued to be conditioned by historically imposed social constructs of femininity. Despite this, over the decades, women have managed to adapt to male-dominated work environments, paving the way for their own professional trajectories.

However, this transition has involved facing multiple barriers, such as gender discrimination in the workplace, which stems from a social structure that privileges a hegemonic patriarchal figure. Along these lines, research focused on gender studies and feminism agrees in highlighting the persistence of systematic obstacles that hinder women's advancement in the workplace.

On the one hand, Fernández (2025) explains the limitations on women's participation from the perspective of economic theories. Among these, the Human Capital Theory, proposed by Becker (1964), stands out, as does the Theory of Labor Market Discrimination, analyzed by Blau and Kahn (2017). The first perspective suggests that women's limited growth stems from restrictions on their access to education, which affect their professional development due to the association of women with housework and motherhood. Meanwhile, the second theory points to the persistence of biases in the hiring and remuneration of women. In turn, Caira-Tovar (2022) discusses the issue of partial equality and, citing Cabrera (2018), identifies occupational segregation, which refers to greater career growth among women who enter fields such as health care, education, and the service sector, while men stand out in the remaining areas.

This unequal distribution described by Caira-Tovar (2022) and Cabrera (2018) consolidates both horizontal and vertical segregation, hindering gender equity. In terms of employment conditions, women not only face difficulties in accessing senior management positions, but also tend to receive lower wages due to the hiring biases described by Blau and Kahn (as cited in Fernández, 2025). The traditional notion that associates women with the role of caregiver creates invisible penalties in their

professional development, limiting their opportunities for advancement based on the assumption that they have less time available.

To counteract these structural barriers, gender equity in organizations should not be viewed solely as an ethical imperative, but as a necessary reconfiguration of workplace dynamics. Analyzing the labor market through Becker's Human Capital Theory (as cited in Fernández, 2025) makes it possible to understand that educational gaps and the lack of shared responsibility at home reduce the ability to fully harness women's talent. Therefore, achieving genuine workplace justice requires implementing policies that neutralize these biases, promote parity in technical leadership positions, and revalue traditionally feminized sectors in order to overcome the systemic barriers that hinder women's career advancement.

Invisibility Dynamics and Workplace Barriers

The urgency of studying and naming the phenomena surrounding women's career development lies in the need to overcome a form of visibility that has historically been partial. Since the late twentieth century, gender studies have begun to employ analytical metaphors to describe more precisely the subtle yet systematic barriers that women face in their professional advancement. The value of these conceptual tools lies in their ability to make measurable and understandable those obstacles that traditional economic models overlook. Among the main metaphors coined in the literature are *the glass ceiling*, *glass cliff*, and *glass labyrinths*, as well as the *sticky floor*.

On the one hand, the concept of the *glass ceiling* was coined by management consultant Marilyn Loden to refer directly to the invisible barriers that prevent women from achieving optimal advancement within organizations and companies (González, 2026). Second, Cook and Glass (2013) described the *glass cliff* as a particular form of workplace risk: women's promotion to leadership roles occurs predominantly during times of corporate crisis, using them as a strategy to mitigate organizational risks. This phenomenon is based on the inadequate recognition of women's prior career trajectories and the persistence of stereotypes associated with the sexual division of labor, which presume that women should act as benevolent and caring figures in high-pressure environments.

At the same time, the concept of *glass labyrinths* graphically illustrates the complex forms of discrimination and indirect inequalities that divert or delay professional development throughout one's career (Alzate, 2025). Finally, the *sticky floor* complements this analytical framework by explaining the structural forces that keep women at the bottom of the occupational pyramid. This phenomenon describes the material and cultural barriers that female workers face when transitioning from the private sphere (associated with unpaid domestic work) to the public sphere, significantly constraining and limiting their initial access to and continued participation in the labor market (González, 2026).

The rigorous study of this set of metaphors is essential to contemporary research, as it challenges the notion that the labor market operates under strict meritocracy and makes it possible to identify that workplace barriers do not stem from a lack of individual capabilities or human capital, but rather from deeply institutionalized cultural structures. Naming and interrelating the *sticky floor* with the glass labyrinths and glass cliffs makes it possible to establish a clear map of gender inequality, bringing corporate and domestic barriers to light and paving the way toward genuinely equitable organizational environments in which professional development is not determined by an individual's gender.

Women's invisibility in the field of design

The creation of these concepts stems from the challenges surrounding women's entry into, permanence within, and development in any occupational field. In particular, this article focuses on the field of design, where gender bias and different forms of invisibility can be identified. This issue is even present in professions that have become established more recently, such as graphic design, which, despite being a young discipline that emerged in the context of the twentieth-century technological and communications revolution, carries, almost invisibly, the patriarchal patterns inherited from its founding schools. As research on the institutional evolution of the discipline has pointed out, contemporary graphic design is often mistakenly perceived as a neutral, modern, and meritocratic field.

Beginning with the institutionalization of the discipline, the main schools that served as references were the Bauhaus and the Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG), which began to develop methodologies for teaching the different areas of design. However, alongside this organization, design came to be established as a discipline created by men and for men. Thus, although women were key pioneers in modern art and design, and even broke barriers in other areas such as architecture and photography, they faced gender-based prejudices that directed them toward the textile workshop or ceramics.

This bias was exacerbated by the fact that one of the main proponents of these ideals was a man rather than a woman. Walter Gropius stated that women seeking admission to the school had to possess exceptional talent, in response to the growing number of women seeking enrollment (Revista Código, 2020). In fact, a proposal was considered to charge women a higher semester enrollment fee—180 marks, while men would pay 50 marks. Ultimately, this proposal was not implemented, and the general base fee of 180 marks was retained (Moisset, 2020).

Although women's entry into the field of design was difficult, those interested managed to adapt and distinguish themselves despite the various obstacles, as was the case with Annie Albers, Gunta Stölzl, Marianne Brandt, Otti Berger, and Lilly Reich (Moisset, 2020). However, the dynamics

rooted in the devaluation of women's contributions to the field persisted as a replicable ideal within the model reproduced through the creation of design education institutions, such as Black Mountain College, The New Bauhaus: American School of Design, and Escuela Superior de Diseño Industrial.

Within this context, women faced the various obstacles and phenomena mentioned above from the moment they sought access to academic education in design. This is supported by the work of historian Isabel Campi (2010), who, in *¿El sexo determina la historia? Las diseñadoras de producto: un estado de la cuestión*, explains how the constructs that have shaped gender affect the association of creative genius with women. Furthermore, she indicates that the prejudices women tend to internalize due to the social sphere in which they develop also constitute additional difficulties for advancing women's role in design.

Although women currently make up the majority of those involved in design education, this is not equivalent to their representation in the workplace. Thus, in 2015, the British Design Council published a report showing that the United Kingdom's design workforce consisted of 78% men and only 22% women. In turn, only 5% were industrial designers, while women accounted for 18% of the workforce in the fields of architecture and construction (Sellers, 2017). Furthermore, according to data provided by the organization Ladies, Wine & Design, founded by Jessica Walsh, only 1% of creative agencies are founded by women and non-binary people (Díaz-Mesa et al., 2025).

In addition, the *Grant Thornton Women in Business 2025* study, published by the website *El Economista*, reports that in Mexico, 4 out of 10 senior management positions, equivalent to 38.9%, are held by women. Furthermore, this percentage is distributed across the Human Resources (48%), Finance (47%), and Marketing (37%) departments, which have a higher representation of women (De la Rosa and Hernández, 2025).

In this context, the field of design is not exempt from the dynamics of inequality present in other occupational sectors. Despite the increase in women's participation in academic design education, various studies and reports show that this presence does not necessarily translate into equitable participation in the professional field. Therefore, it is pertinent to analyze how female designers themselves perceive the existence of these barriers in their career development.

For these reasons, this article seeks to identify the invisible barriers perceived by female designers in their professional development within the field of design, based on the application of a reflection tool.

Methodological development

This research is based on a qualitative approach with a basic research design and an exploratory scope. This design allowed for a phenomenological approach to a specific study group, with the aim of identifying the invisible barriers that restrict women's development in the workplace. With regard to its temporal dimension, the study employs a synchronous cross-sectional design, given that the collection of empirical data was strictly limited to the period between March 9 and 13, 2026.

The information was obtained through a field-based approach that implemented a qualitative reflection tool. This instrument was applied to a multistage purposive sample of 57 graphic designers affiliated with the Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, comprising students, faculty members, female research faculty members, and graduates; therefore, given the qualitative nature of the methodological design, no variables were manipulated. It is worth noting that this tool for collecting work-related experiences derives from an ongoing master's thesis project. This article constitutes an academic product resulting from a research stay conducted during the first semester of 2026 at the aforementioned higher education institution.

The process of administering the instrument was structured sequentially in two distinct phases. The first phase was aimed exclusively at students enrolled in the final semesters of the bachelor's degree program in Graphic Design, specifically the seventh, eighth, and ninth semesters. The second phase took place as part of an academic and participatory session dedicated to discussing gender-based barriers in the workplace. This educational session was attended by students in their final semesters, as well as faculty members, researchers, and graduates of the institution, thereby contributing to the qualitative representativeness of the sample.

Procedure for administering the instrument

The data collection process was structured around two distinct implementation strategies aimed at assessing the participants' experiences through the use of the designed instrument (see Figure 1). The first experimental group consisted of a sample of 50 graphic designers. This initial group received a brief theoretical introduction to the subject matter and a specific explanation of the overall objective of the reflection tool.

Figure 1

Collage derived from moments in which the university's graphic designers completed the instrument.



Note: Process photographs by the authors.

It is important to clarify that they were not provided with prior instructions or methodological guidelines regarding the use of the device. This deliberate omission was a response to the methodological design of the exercise, which sought to record and analyze the spontaneous, organic, and unbiased interaction between the designer and the instrument's interface. Likewise, in order to ensure an environment free from psychological pressure that could alter the authenticity of the responses, no regulated time limit was established, nor was any form of coercion exerted during completion. Once the exercise had been completed independently, the participants formally returned the tool for subsequent systematization.

Furthermore, the second phase of the application took place as part of an academic and participatory session focused on discussing invisible gender barriers within the professional environment of graphic design. This second group consisted of seven additional designers. During this discussion session, the attendees were formally and voluntarily invited to interact with the reflection tool. This approach not only allowed for the collection of qualitative responses through the instrument, but also fostered an appropriate environment in which the participants could share, through the free-form narrative technique, their experiences and career paths within the contemporary graphic design labor market.

Analysis and discussion of the results

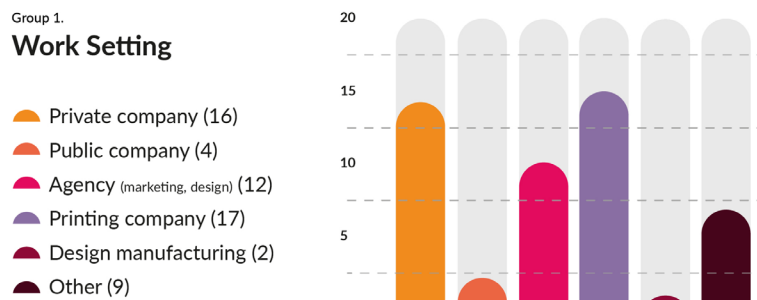
Following the administration of the data collection instrument, a database was compiled containing a total of 53 valid responses, of which 48 corresponded to the Group 1 sample and five to Group 2. For data processing, the collected information was systematically organized around

three fundamental analytical dimensions: the range of work experience, the professional field of employment, and individual and collective perceptions of invisible gender barriers. The following section presents a detailed analysis of these indicators, disaggregated by groups and study variables.

With regard to the first dimension, which focuses on the length and consolidation of participants' careers, Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of work experience ranges obtained from the Group 1 sample, which consisted primarily of students enrolled in their final semesters (seventh, eighth, and ninth). The findings show a clear concentration in the one-to five-year professional experience range, with a total of 33 responses, followed by the less-than-one-year range, with 13 mentions, while only one participant reported being within the six- to 10-year range.

Figure 2

Results of the range of work experience obtained with the instrument.



Note: Prepared by the authors.

From an analytical perspective, this picture reveals that the diagnosis is based primarily on perceptions derived from early career trajectories. This early stage of entry into the workforce is methodologically valuable, as it allows for the identification of how discrimination dynamics and cultural barriers operate at the very moment when future graphic designers transition from the university environment to the labor market. Consequently, the responses reflect the designers' initial encounters with the structures of the productive environment, capturing the empirical manifestation of early phenomena such as the *sticky floor*, before the participants even attempt to gain access to senior management positions.

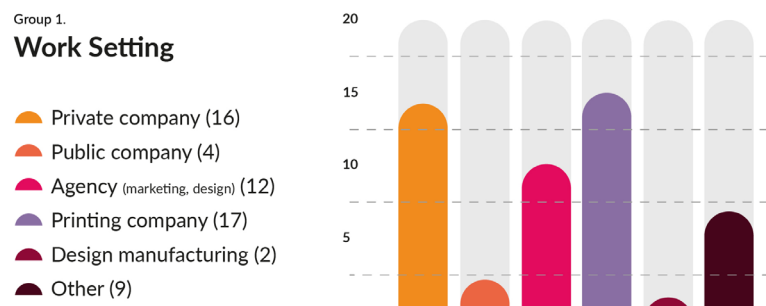
Furthermore, the second analytical dimension addresses the specific context in which the participants practice or have practiced the discipline of Design. The results presented in Figure 3 show that the sample works across a diverse range of work environments within the field of

visual communication. The largest concentration of the sample is found in the printing sector, which represents the predominant area, with 17 mentions, followed closely by the private sector, with 16 responses. In third place are agencies specializing in marketing and design, with 12 participants. These three sectors constitute the main areas of employment for the professionals surveyed.

In contrast, there is notably lower participation in the public sector, which accounts for only four mentions, and in maquiladora-type companies, with just two responses. Finally, a group of nine participants fell into the “Other” category, suggesting the existence of emerging, independent, or non-traditional forms of employment in the field of design. Taken together, these data show that the visual communication labor market analyzed is strongly driven by the private sector and sectors involved in direct technical production, with a marginal presence of the government and industrial manufacturing sectors.

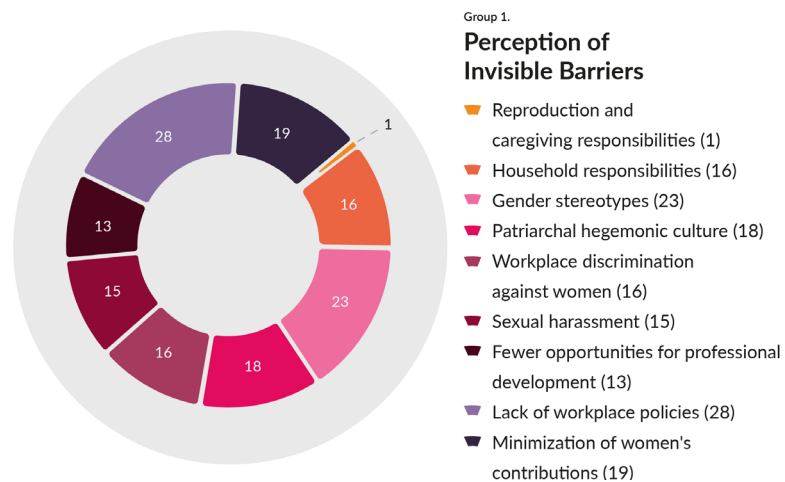
Figure 3

Results of the areas of professional development obtained with the instrument.



Note: Prepared by the authors.

The third analytical dimension of this study addresses the identification of the sociocultural and institutional obstacles present in professional practice. Beyond individual experiences, the results make it possible to characterize the collective perception of Group 1 regarding invisible barriers in the professional environment. Figure 4 details the frequencies associated with these categories, where a total of 149 mentions indicates a group consensus regarding the multifactorial and systemic nature of gender inequality in the sector.

Figure 4*Results of the perception of invisible barriers obtained with the instrument.**Note: Prepared by the authors.*

From this collective perspective, the participants evaluated agree in identifying structural deficiencies as the main obstacle to career development. This is reflected in the high level of agreement regarding the absence of labor policies (28 mentions) and the persistence of gender stereotypes (23 mentions). Likewise, there is shared recognition of cultural issues, such as the minimization of women's contributions (19 mentions) and the presence of a hegemonic patriarchal culture (18 mentions). Taken together, the responses demonstrate that the participants do not perceive these barriers as isolated or personal incidents, but rather as an institutionalized framework that broadly affects women's development in this field.

The findings clearly show that the absence of equitable labor policies constitutes the barrier most frequently identified by the participants, with a total of 28 mentions. This result is critical because it demonstrates that the designers identify the problem not as a series of isolated incidents, but as a structural and institutional deficiency within organizations. This factor is followed by the persistence of gender stereotypes, with 23 mentions, confirming that traditional expectations regarding social roles continue to operate as a filter that conditions how women's work is treated and valued.

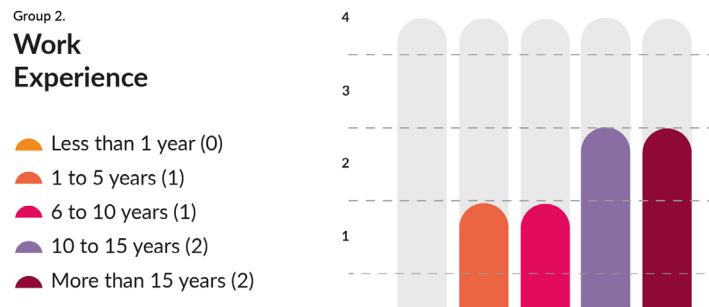
A second cluster of issues comprises the minimization of women's contributions (19 mentions) and the presence of a hegemonic patriarchal culture (18 mentions). From a theoretical perspective, both categories are closely linked, as they suggest that the field of design continues to be strongly masculinized in its underlying power dynamics, which tends to diminish the merit, authority, and visibility of proposals and leadership assumed by women.

Furthermore, a consistent pattern can be observed across three particularly serious issues: workplace discrimination against women (16 mentions), demands arising from household responsibilities (16 mentions), and instances of sexual harassment (15 mentions). The parity among these indicators highlights the double burden faced by female designers in the early stages of their careers, in which the demands of the private sphere (associated with the *sticky floor*) coexist with hostile or inequitable work environments.

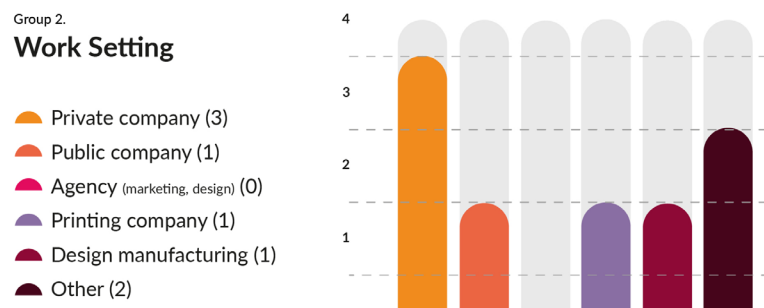
Finally, limited opportunities for development accounted for 13 mentions, while the category of “reproduction and child-rearing” was mentioned only once. This low incidence of the child-rearing factor correlates directly with the demographic profile of the Group 1 sample, which, being composed predominantly of students in their final semesters and recent graduates, is currently at an early stage of entry into the workforce, prior to the formation of households with economically dependent family members. However, the generalized perception of the remaining barriers points to an adverse scenario that puts their long-term retention and development within the discipline at risk.

In the second group (see Figure 5), consisting of faculty members, research faculty members, and graduates, the designers’ range of work experience extends from 3 to 34 years, allowing for an approach to the perception of barriers among participants with greater professional experience. The figure represents a total of six accumulated responses. The vast majority of this group is concentrated in the higher ranges. Specifically, 66.6% of the participants have more than a decade of active professional experience in the sector.

This professional maturity is key to the study. Their responses do not stem from early entry into the workforce. On the contrary, they reflect the perspective of professionals who have experienced the long-term evolution of the field of Graphic Design. Therefore, this group helps to shed light on more advanced barriers. Their testimonies make it possible to analyze the *glass ceiling* and the *glass cliff*. These phenomena tend to emerge when women attempt to advance to high-level management positions.

Figure 5*Results of the range of work experience obtained with the instrument.**Note: Prepared by the authors.*

Meanwhile, in terms of the area of employment, the private sector stands out, followed by the “Other” category, identified as teaching work. The findings in this section total eight responses. The analysis shows that the most common sector for this group is the private sector, accounting for 37.5% of the total mentions (see Figure 6).

Figure 6*Results of the areas of professional development obtained with the instrument.**Note: Prepared by the authors.*

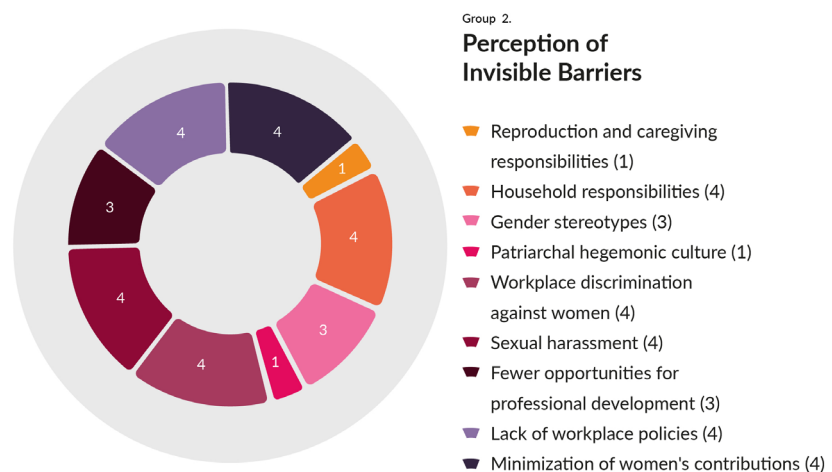
A particularly important characteristic of this group is the dispersion of its responses across sectors that are less common among students in Group 1, such as the public sector and maquiladora companies. This is because the participants have greater professional experience, which has allowed them to diversify their services or move toward larger corporate and institutional structures throughout their careers.

In contrast, it is noteworthy that design and marketing agencies received no mentions in this group. This finding suggests an interesting transition within the profession: while young designers or those in the early stages of their careers (Group 1) are heavily concentrated in agencies, since these are the primary spaces for early career entry, professionals with more advanced career trajectories tend to leave this sector in search of stability or growth in the private sector or as independent practitioners.

To conclude the diagnosis resulting from the application of this instrument, Figure 7 details the frequencies associated with Group 2's perception of gender-related obstacles. Since this sample consists of professionals with advanced and established career trajectories, the accumulation of multiple responses reveals a critical and multifaceted picture, with a total of 28 mentions distributed across the various dimensions of the analysis.

Figure 7

Results of the perception of invisible barriers obtained with the instrument



Note: Prepared by the authors.

The data clearly show an identical concentration across five of the main issues evaluated, with each accumulating a maximum of four responses: household responsibilities, workplace discrimination against women, sexual harassment, the absence of labor policies, and the minimization of women's contributions. From an interpretive perspective, this statistical tie at the highest levels is highly relevant to the study. It demonstrates that, despite having greater professional seniority and stability in the labor market (as observed in Figure 4), the most experienced graphic designers continue to experience the same structural frictions and violations

of their labor rights as professionals in the early stages of their careers. The coexistence of household care demands with hostile corporate environments and the lack of internal regulatory frameworks confirms that discrimination does not diminish with professional maturity, but rather remains latent throughout the entire career.

At a second level of incidence, gender stereotypes are found alongside limited opportunities for development, with both indicators receiving a total of three responses. This finding suggests that preconceived social labels continue to operate as a filter that limits women's upward mobility within design organizations, hindering their access to senior management positions or strategic decision-making roles.

Finally, the categories of reproduction and child-rearing, along with the hegemonic patriarchal culture, had the lowest incidence, with one mention each. When this finding is considered in context, the low frequency does not suggest a real absence of the phenomenon in the workplace; on the contrary, it indicates a psychological adaptation mechanism. Through this process, female designers with established career trajectories assimilate masculinized codes and downplay their gender identity in order to fit into business dynamics that value emotional toughness and aggressive competitiveness (Vial and Beneda, 2026). Nevertheless, the prevalence of the remaining invisible barriers demonstrates that the Graphic Design professional environment urgently requires structural reconfiguration to ensure equitable spaces.

The barriers identified by the participants reflect limitations that have already been discussed in the literature, such as gender discrimination, biases in hiring and compensation, and limited professional training associated with domestic roles (Fernández, 2025b). Furthermore, occupational segregation stands out as a factor that confines women's professional growth to specific sectors, resulting in "partial equality" (Caira-Tovar, 2022). All of the female designers surveyed identified at least two of these obstacles within their work experiences in their respective areas or fields; in other words, none of them failed to report the presence of these difficulties.

In this regard, the exercise of identifying the presence of the various invisible barriers also made it possible to determine that some were more consistent and more prevalent across the two application groups. For example, in the first group, in which the range of work experience was predominantly between less than one and five years, the absence of labor policies stood out as the primary response. Meanwhile, in the second group, with a range of work experience from three to more than 15 years, the most frequently reported barriers were household responsibilities, workplace discrimination against women, sexual harassment, limited opportunities for development, the absence of labor policies, and the minimization of women's contributions.

◆ Conclusions

Although invisible barriers are apparent from the early stages of professional practice, work experience seems to influence the ability to recognize them with greater complexity, making it possible to identify not only one, but multiple ways in which they manifest themselves. This is important because it demonstrates that the instrument functions more effectively when used with designers who have greater experience or have spent more time in the workforce.

Likewise, the different work contexts identified among the designers reiterate the existence of the various analytical metaphors mentioned above, while also revealing the simultaneous presence of several of them. For example, taking into account the main barriers identified within the experiences of the first group, it can be stated that most of them fall within the *glass labyrinths*, as they point to the absence of labor policies, the influence of gender stereotypes, and the presence of a hegemonic patriarchal culture within the work environment. At the same time, they also indicate limited opportunities for development, which undoubtedly lead toward the *glass ceiling*, since the obstacles associated with it begin to take shape even before a woman seeks to occupy leadership positions.

Regarding the second group, the coexistence of these concepts is even clearer. As an example, household responsibilities and gender stereotypes would correspond to the *sticky floor*; at the same time, these two factors, together with workplace discrimination against women, the minimization of women's contributions, and the absence of labor policies, give rise to the presence of the *glass ceiling*, as well as the *glass labyrinths*. The phenomenon that is probably least immediately perceptible in the data obtained through the instrument is that of the *glass cliffs*; however, during the application process, several designers shared experiences in which the aforementioned aspects could fit within this metaphor.

In this way, it can be stated that, when beginning their professional careers, at least one of the phenomena described above could be identified depending on the life context of the designer in question. Likewise, increased work experience seems to foster greater identification of the different phenomena associated with invisible barriers. However, as the results demonstrate, many of these dynamics are often incorporated unconsciously, as they form part of normalized structures that have been historically sustained by gender constructs.

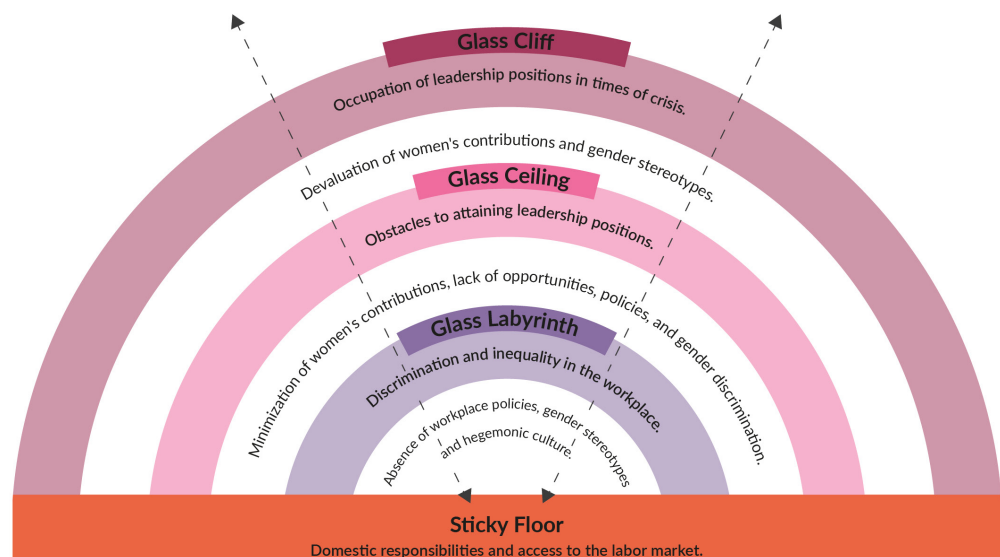
In this sense, work experience makes it possible to identify the progressive emergence of different metaphors, which may coexist and even provide a basis for the use of the instrument in future applications.

Therefore, the *glass cliffs* could be considered the final position in women's career development, as they correspond to occupying a leadership position during a time of crisis, with the possibility of falling back to any of the other levels (the *glass ceiling* or *glass labyrinths*, and even all the

way to the bottom, identified as the *sticky floor*). The latter contains the core element of the entire phenomenon, namely, the transition from the private sphere, with its domestic responsibilities, to the public sphere within the labor market. It should also be noted that the metaphors can share the invisible barriers identified among one another, depending on each individual's work experience (see Figure 8).

Figura 8

Esquema con propuesta de coexistencia entre las metáforas analíticas.



Nota: Elaboración propia.

In this regard, it is important to note that Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory and Blau and Kahn's (2017) Theory of Labor Market Discrimination, discussed in Fernández (2025c) and mentioned above, could form part of the various invisible barriers or even be studied in greater depth within each analytical metaphor, since, taken together, they represent obstacles to women's professional development. In sum, it can be stated that the continued presence of women in the workforce, particularly in contexts where they face various structural barriers, can be interpreted as a form of resistance to hegemonic patriarchal dynamics, which continue to privilege forms of development historically associated with masculinity, relegating women's experiences and career trajectories to the background.

In turn, these dynamics contribute to the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity patterns that affect women's professional development, in which the recognition and valuation of their work are often mediated by gendered imaginaries constructed from a predominantly masculine

perspective. Largely for this reason, women's contributions to the field of design are often challenged twice over, resulting in their minimization and, in some cases, their invisibility.

Although the origin of these initial actions with the emergence of modern design was mentioned at the beginning of this article, this dynamic continues to be present today, as it remains one of the invisible barriers mentioned by the majority of the designers.

Finally, one point worth emphasizing regarding the various arguments surrounding workplace dynamics is that many women tend to normalize these situations, largely because of the different contexts in which they develop. On the other hand, this raises questions about the possible strategies that women develop in response to these dynamics, opening up a line of inquiry that could be explored in greater depth in future research.

In this sense, understanding that women participate in a system that is not always favorable to them makes it possible not only to bring these conditions to light, but also to consider forms of collective action to counteract them. There is undoubtedly a continuing need to develop strategies and tools that foster reflection on these dynamics, particularly for those who have not yet identified these phenomena within their work experiences, which would constitute a first task to be undertaken in this regard. Likewise, it is appropriate to develop resources that enable those who already recognize these barriers to understand them more clearly and, to the extent possible, establish ways to address and overcome them throughout their professional development.

The foregoing opens up the possibility of continuing to develop proposals that not only make these issues visible, but also contribute to their understanding and addressing them from within the field of design itself, thereby strengthening the paths previously forged by other women and, above all, helping new generations pursue their professional development under more equitable conditions. ●

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◆ About the authors

Mónica Susana De La Barrera Medina

She holds a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the Universidad Iberoamericana (UIA), as well as a Master's degree with honors in Graphic Design from the Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí (UASLP), specializing in Typographic Design. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Communication Design from the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM-Azcapotzalco) and is a Level 1 member of the National System of Researchers (SNII 1) of CONAHCYT. Since 2001, she has been a professor at the Center for Design and Construction Sciences of the Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes (UAA) and is a Full-Time Professor-Researcher (PTC), Category Tenured C, with a PRODEP desirable profile. She is also the leader of the "Integrated Planning and Design" Academic Group. She is a member of the Master's Program Council in Urban Planning and belongs to the Core Academic Faculty of the Ph.D. Program in Sciences of Anthropic Environments, both of which are graduate programs registered in the PNPC at UAA. Her research focuses on design and the user from an interdisciplinary perspective, maintaining a holistic vision that assimilates the importance of visual communication, planning, and integrated design.

Priscila Joseline Coronado Gurrola

She is a graphic designer and a professor in the Fashion Design and Management program at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez. She has nine years of professional experience in communication and visual identity projects; furthermore, she is a student in the Master's program in Studies of Creative Processes in Art and Design. Her research explores the glass ceiling phenomenon based on the labor experiences of female graphic designers in Ciudad Juárez. She has participated in academic projects and outreach spaces focused on design and gender studies. Currently, she is developing a tool to identify professional inequality dynamics, promoting critical reflection within creative disciplines.



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