

Chapter 2

Profile of the women working in the coffee sector in Brazil (Phase 1)

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Introduction

Brazil is the most significant coffee producer in the world. Since 1727, when coffee first arrived in Brazil, it has been associated with the history of the country's development. It has acted as a litmus test for the wealth in the country, given that the revenue generated by coffee has speeded up Brazil's growth, facilitating its access to the international market. Recently, the Brazilian coffee sector has been responsible for exporting over 30 million bags, generating revenue of over US\$ 2 billion per year. Brazil continues to be the largest exporter of coffee in the world. It is responsible for 30% of the world's recent coffee harvests. That is approximately 130 million (60 kg) bags (Conselho dos Exportadores de Café do Brasil, 2017).

From a production perspective, many people still believe that the

coffee workforce is mainly made up of men. In fact, a significant part of this sector's workers is female, and women must gain space and visibility in this market. History shows that the battle for recognition of women's work is hard but gratifying.

The construction of female citizenship was painful, damaging and at the same time rewarding over the years. And continuous processes were fought in the fight for gender equality and recognition of women's rights. However, women gradually managed to demand their rights and their freedom (Santos; Garcia, 2015, p. 297, our translation).¹

What is the importance of women in society? Until the end of the 18th century, this question had an easy answer: women's place was at home, caring for the family and their rights were not guaranteed. Today, this old-fashioned view persists in some social spheres, although changes are occurring to the paradigm of the role of women in the family and society. The importance of an egalitarian society, offering equal opportunities for women and men, both from an educational and political point of view, is an old demand that emerged in the 18th century. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft, in the United Kingdom, published a manifesto, expounding the needs of women (Taylor, 2003).

Great women authors, each in her time, raised the issue of women's representation. From Jane Austen, a major influence on 19th century English literature with her hard and fearless heroines who challenged the ideas of their times to Marie Curie, Bertha Lutz, and Simone de Beauvoir in the 20th century, who broke paradigms and taboos, making significant contributions toward the recognition of the importance of women for society.

The role of women in history must be considered, taking into account struggles for equal rights, highlighting women's need to work two shifts that involve both private domestic tasks and public professional activities. Women's strength has shone through in their constant struggle for

autonomy and recognition, as history shows when the ideology of “a woman’s place” is set aside within specific contexts:

Women became active union members during the war years, but this did not benefit them after the war when the managers reinstated the same sexual division of pre-war work conditions (Tilly, 1995, p. 57, our translation).²

In the post-war period, some feminist initiatives sought to “free” women from their own body, as well as addressing labour issues. Their aim was always equality. Freeman (1975) argues that between the 1960s and 1980s, the women’s liberation manifesto was an essential milestone in ensuring the rights of women.

Things were no different in Brazil. At that time, women were working in factories and the fields and their working hours did not cease when the working day was over. Often, they still had to perform domestic tasks, known as women’s double shift. Del Priore (2007) argues that this has been the case for women since colonial times, in the sugar-cane and coffee plantations of the Brazilian Republican period. According to the study, Portrait of Gender and Race Inequalities (Ipea, 2017), based on the 1995-2015 National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) historical series, compiled by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), women work, on average, 7.5 hours more a week than men, because of the double shifts. In 2015, total average working hours for women were 53.6 and 46.1 for men.

Today, the role of women in Brazilian agriculture, a traditionally male sector, stands out. Women are gaining space and visibility as agronomists, businesswomen, landowners, rural workers, sharecroppers, tenants, among others.

According to the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2013), in 2013, 13% of rural properties in Brazil were owned by women. In comparison to the 1970s, when it was never above 8%, this number

has almost doubled.

Women are present in all areas of the coffee industry, from planting to preparing a cup of coffee. The present work aims to establish the profile of women involved in the sector. It will contribute to the understanding of the current role of women in this industry in Brazil and help to improve the living standards of these women in the future.

The general aim of this work was to organize information about women involved in the coffee agribusiness in Brazil and describe their main characteristics. Specific objectives were to: present the percentage of women who answered the questionnaire in phase 1 of this project, by region; identify in which sectors of agribusiness they work; describe the age of these women; their socioeconomic profile (marital status, educational level, race, and income); identify the number of people in their families who also work in the coffee sector; and identify these women's plans.

Potential impacts

Generating knowledge and visibility about the women involved in the different segments of the coffee agribusiness in Brazil to promote decision-making, initiatives, and programmes at the municipal, state and federal levels. Implementing actions to improve skills and provide further opportunities such as access to markets and credit and thereby benefit the entire sector and society as a whole.

Methodology

The current quantitative research was conducted using samples in seven stages: the design of the questionnaire; completion online and offline (the latter with the assistance of an interviewer), interviews; tabulation of collected data; processing of the data; preparation of graphs and maps; results analysis; and writing the final report of the findings.

Online questionnaires were made available via the Internet and hard copies were distributed at various coffee sector events.

The questions were structured to elicit the following information: 1) Who are the women involved in the coffee production chain in Brazil? and 2) in which regions of Brazil are they to be found?

Seven hundred and thirty-seven women answered the questionnaires between July 2016 and April 2017, of which 171 (23%) responded online and 566 (77%) offline. The data were tabulated and organized according to different interests and subsequently analysed to standardize answers and identify potential mistakes inherent in the completion of the questionnaires. Finally, they were quantified to facilitate the interpretation of the findings. After analysis of the data, graphs and maps were produced and presented in the final report.

Results

Related to the regions – The women that answered most of the questionnaires (73%) belonged to the largest coffee producing Brazilian states, that is, Minas Gerais (50.4%) and Espírito Santo (22.6%). The other 27% of women came from the following states: São Paulo (9.2%), Rondônia (8.4%), Paraná (6.5%) Bahia (2.2%) Rio de Janeiro (0.4%) and Ceará (0.1%) (Figure 1).

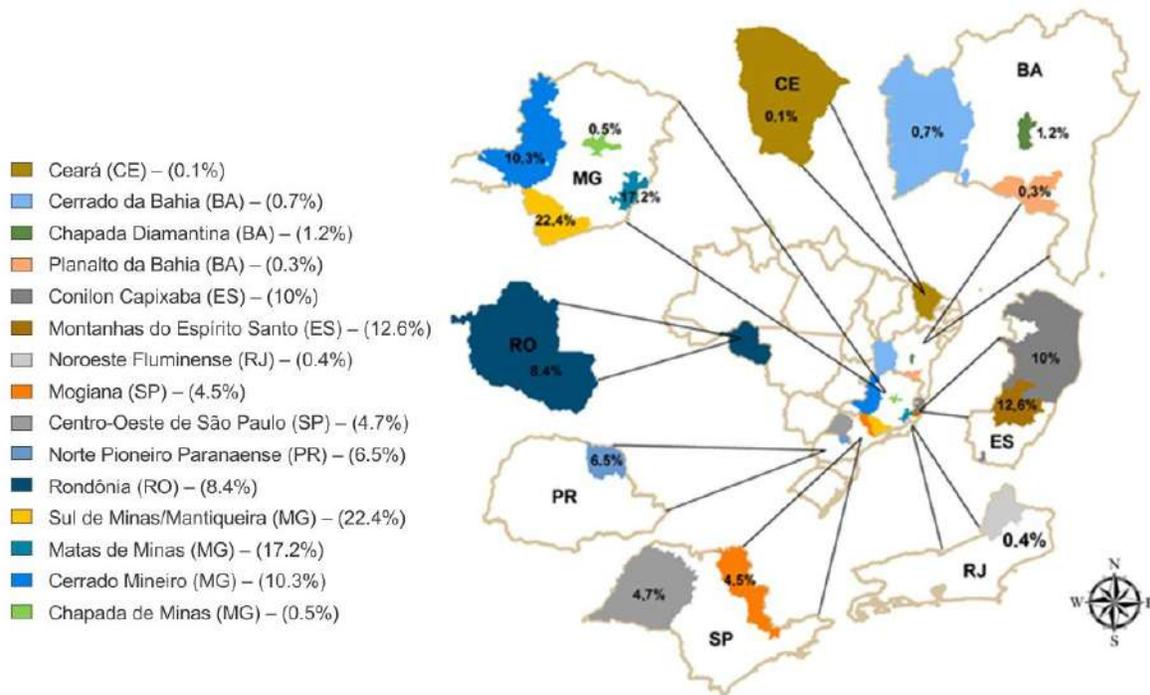


Figure 1. Percentage of questionnaires answered by micro-region or state (UF).

Most women work in coffee growing (about 60%) (Figure 2) as growers/landowners (approximately 90%) (Figure 3). Of all the 737 that answered the questionnaire, 268 (36.4%) did not answer the question “time spent in coffee growing”; among those who did (63.6%), most (approximately 60%) claimed that they spent part of their time on coffee growing and part in domestic tasks. Others (20.3%) had a second paid job, and only 18.1% worked full time in coffee growing. Finally, 4.7% said they did not spend their time looking after the land (Figure 4).

The other women who answered the questionnaires and did not work in coffee growing (approximately 40%), worked in teaching, research and outreach work (12.5%), as well as in coffee marketing and trading (9.9%). Other areas with smaller representation were processing (2.6%), advertising (1.9%), agricultural inputs (1.6%) and logistics (1.5%). Finally, 10.4% claimed that they worked in other areas (Figure 2).

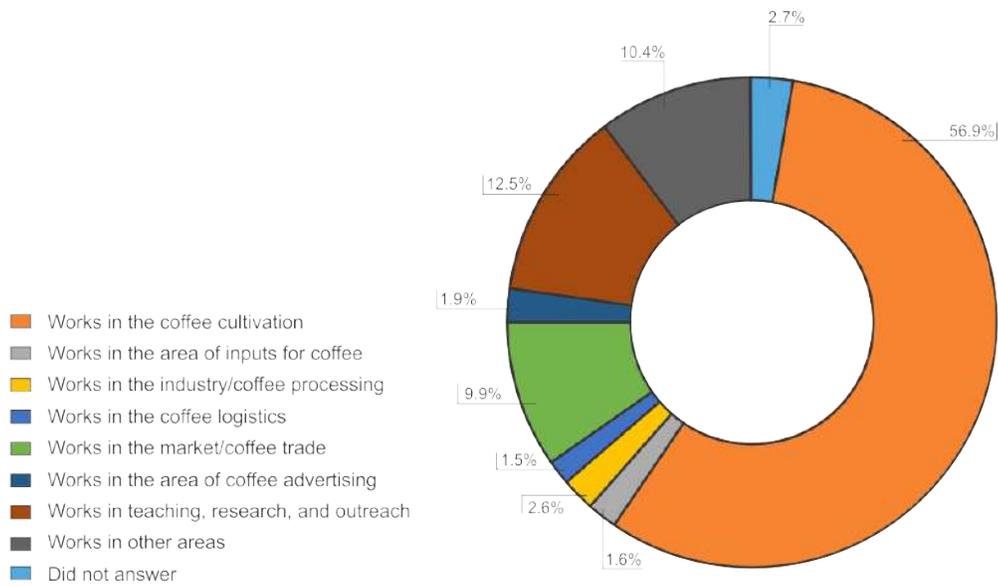


Figure 2. Percentage of women working in different sectors who answered the questionnaire between July 2016 and April 2017 (n = 737).

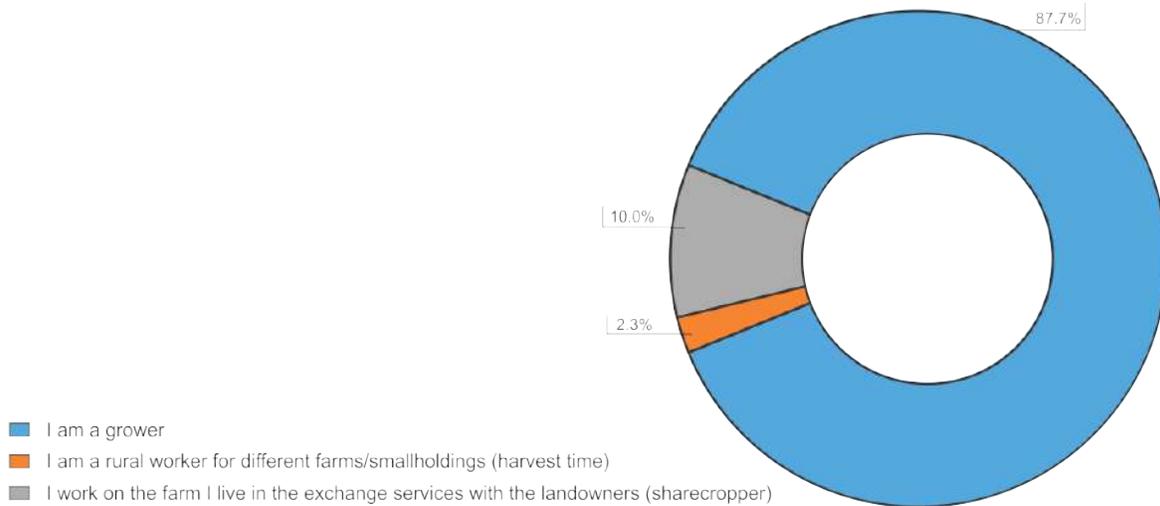


Figure 3. Percentage of women with different roles in coffee production and who answered the questionnaire between July 2016 and April 2017.

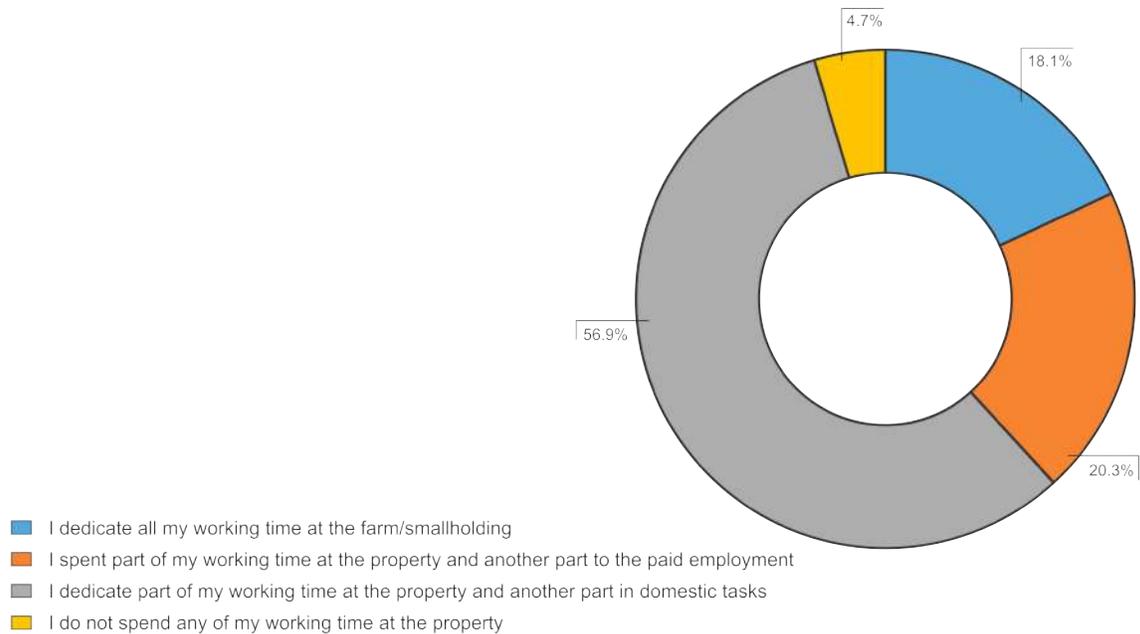


Figure 4. Percentage of the 469 women working in the different areas of coffee production who answered the questionnaire on time management between July 2016 and April 2017 and how they manage their time at the property where they work.

Regarding the age range of respondents: most (76%) are between 26 and 59 years old, and within this group, the majority are between 26 and 35 years old (30.7%) (Figure 5). Half the women (50.3%) are married (43%) or in a stable relationship (7.3%) and the other half (44.2%) are single (41.2%) or widowed (3%); 5.5% did not answer this question (Figure 6).

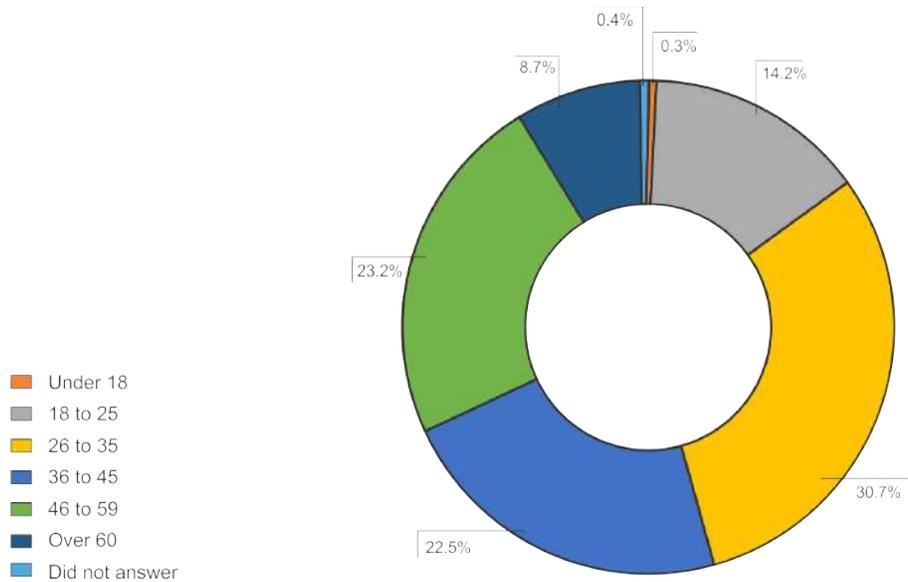


Figure 5. Percentage of women by age who answered the questionnaire between July 2016 and April 2017.

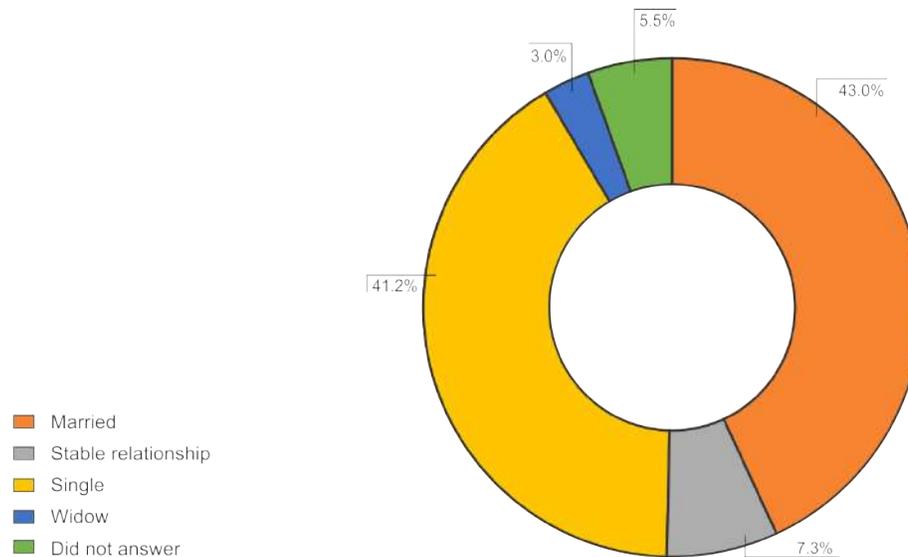


Figure 6. Percentage of women by marital status who answered the questionnaire between July 2016 and April 2017.

Educational level: 58% of the respondents had studied to higher education (complete or incomplete) or post-graduate level. Only 40.6% of women have a lower educational level (up to secondary level, including technical education) (19.2%) or only (complete or incomplete) basic education (21.4%). Only 0.5% of respondents said that they were

illiterate (Figure 7).

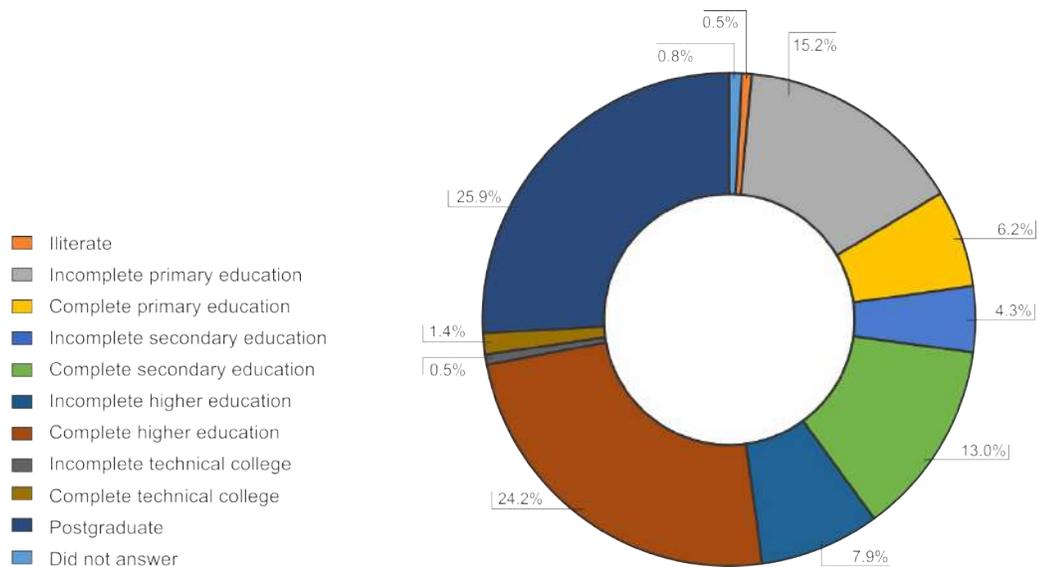


Figure 7. Percentage of the 737 women by educational level who answered the questionnaire between July 2016 and April 2017.

Most respondents considered themselves to be white (73.8%) while another 18.7%, mixed race. The percentage of black (3.7%) and Asian respondents (2.4%) was low; 1.4% did not answer this question (Figure 6). Figure 9 gives an overview of all regions with regard to colour/race as by the women was stated.

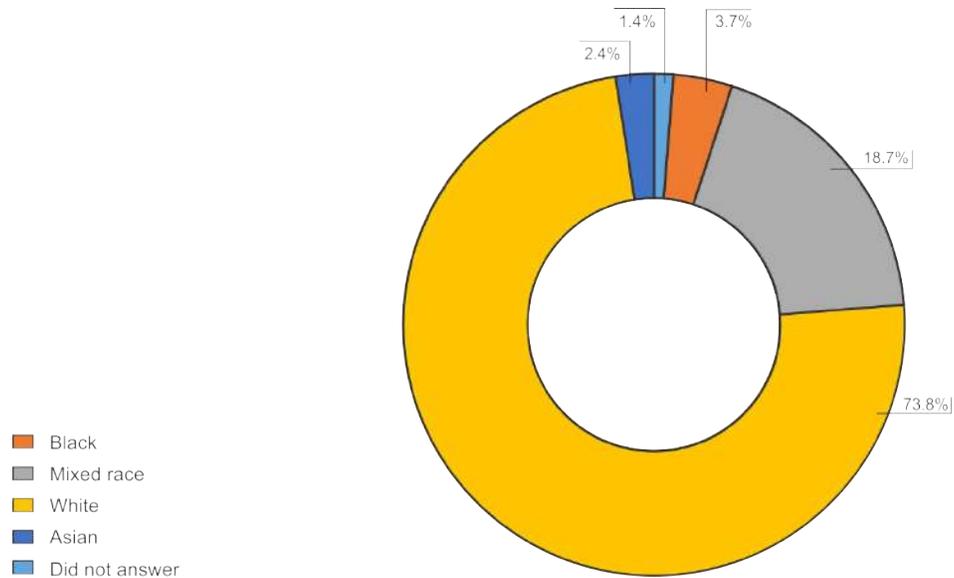


Figure 8. Percentage of the 737 women by colour/race who answered the questionnaire between July 2016 and April 2017.

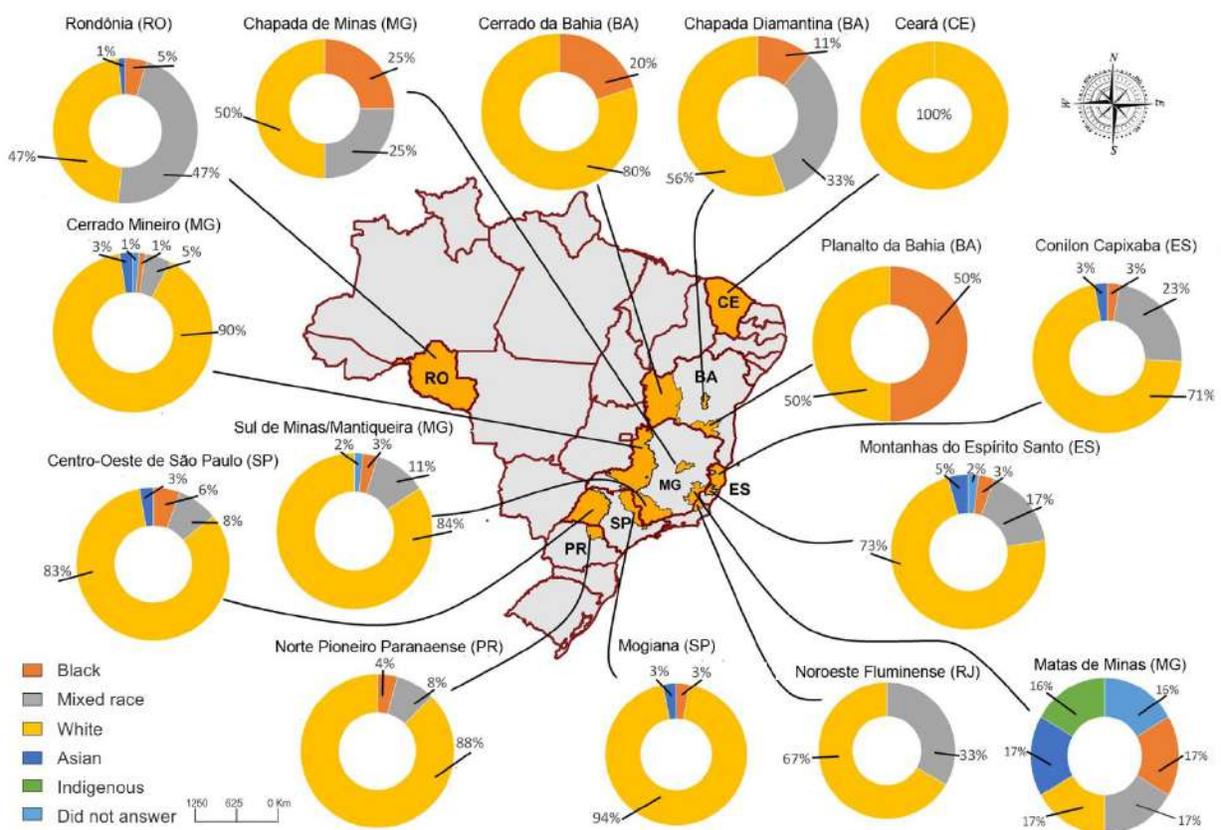


Figure 9. Percentage of the 737 women by colour/race who answered the questionnaire between July 2016 and April 2017.

With regard to income, a little over 1/3 of respondents (35.4%) said that they earned between two and five times the minimum wage, another 1/3 (31.8%), over five times the minimum wage and a little less than 1/3 stated they earned the minimum wage or less (Figure 10).

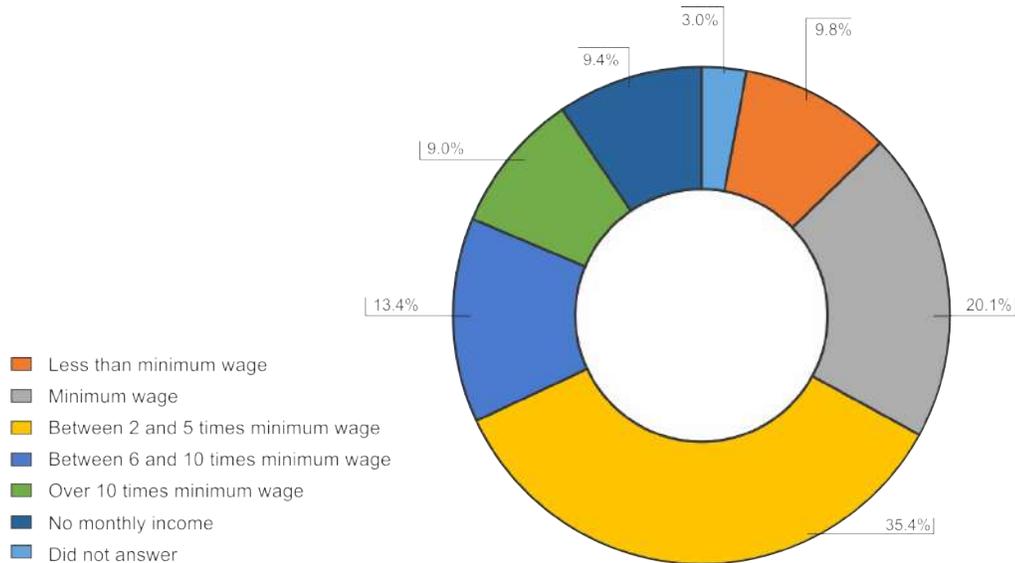


Figure 10. Percentage of the 737 women by monthly income who answered the questionnaire between July 2016 and April 2017.

Figure 11 shows the number of respondents who answered questions on family members working in the coffee sector. The majority (76.8%) had more than one family member working in coffee. The most significant proportion (41.8%) said that one or two members of their family worked in the coffee sector. Few (19.4%) said that they had no members of their family working in this industry.

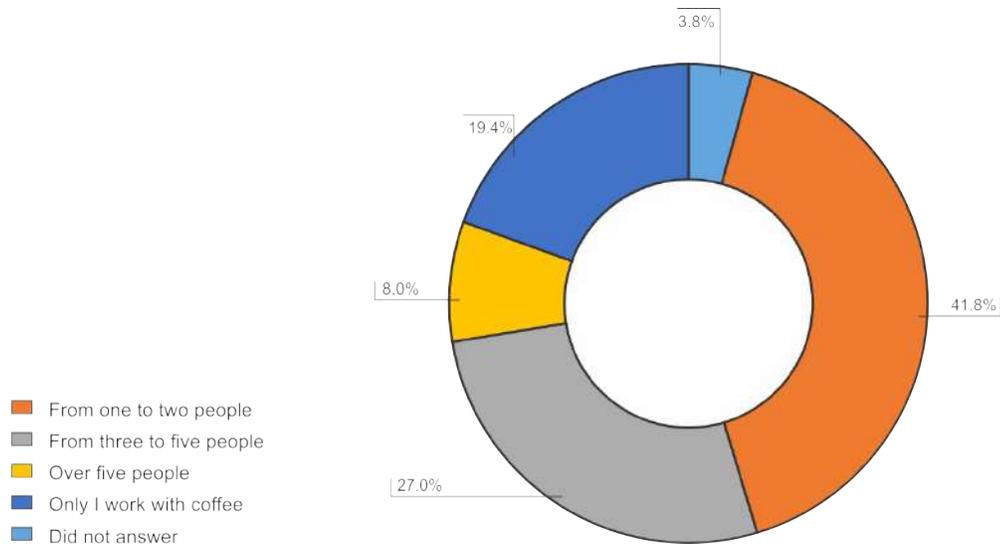


Figure 11. Percentage of the 737 women who said they had family members working in the coffee industry and answered the questionnaire between July 2016 and April 2017.

Finally, with regard to plans, approximately half the women said they wanted to continue to work on their farm/land/smallholding (30.9%) or increase the size of their cultivated areas (17%). The percentage of women who wanted to sell their property (3.5%) was low. Among these women, 0.8% wanted to remain working in the industry while 2.7% said they did not want to continue in the coffee sector; 43% said that they wanted to continue to work in the coffee industry, but while some (13.6%) wanted to remain in the area where they worked, others (11.7%) wanted to change to a different segment of the coffee industry (Figure 12).

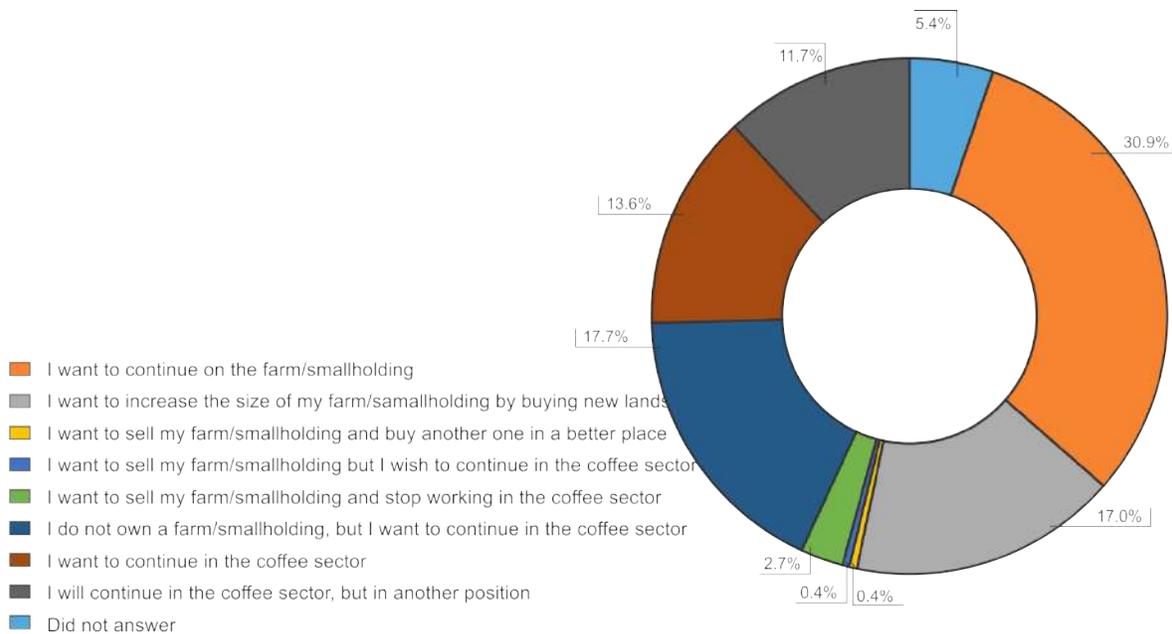


Figure 12. Percentage of the 737 women who expressed their expectations for their future in the coffee industry and answered the questionnaire between July 2016 and April 2017.

Conclusion

The women who answered the questionnaire in the first phase of this study were mainly between 26 and 59 years old, and, more specifically, between 26 and 35 years old. Half the women respondents were single, and half married. Most earn between two and five times the minimum wage or over, and the majority have one or two members of their family also working in the coffee sector. Most of these women also considered themselves to be white and they were mainly growers/landowners or worked as teachers, researchers, and outreach workers, as well as in the coffee trade or marketing.

Most of the response to the questionnaires came from women in the following micro-regions: Minas/Mantiqueira, Matas de Minas and Cerrado Mineiro in the state of Minas Gerais; followed by Montanhas in Espírito Santo and Conilon Capixaba, both micro-regions in Espírito Santo. The

two regions with the least number of women who answered the questionnaire were respectively Planalto da Bahia and the State of Ceará. This suggests that in these regions, we find the largest and the smallest numbers of women involved in the coffee sector.

Among the activities of respondents working in coffee production, the most significant were growers/landowners, followed by workers in education, research, and outreach, as well as the coffee trade and marketing. A smaller number of women who answered the questionnaire were rural workers (2.6%) or worked in other areas, such as logistics (1.5%), agricultural inputs (1.6%), advertising (1.9%) and processing/manufacturing (2.6%).

As regards time spent on different activities, most women growers said that they spent part of their working time on their property and part on domestic tasks. The smallest number of replies related to women who said they did not spend any of their working time in their properties.

Concerning future expectations, a large number of women hoped to continue within the coffee sector.

Based on the results, it may be observed that many respondents consider themselves white, have higher levels of education and income, and usually work as growers. This may be due to the places where the questionnaires were made available (symposiums, congresses, and meetings), which tend to congregate people of a particular profile.

This survey is relevant because it is a first attempt to measure the situation of women within the coffee sector. However, it is essential to conduct other studies in this sector, in the different regions of Brazil.

In addition to conducting this survey in symposiums, congresses, and meetings across the different coffee regions, the questionnaires should also be made available in other types of events, as well as on the

coffee farms themselves. More specifically, this should be during the harvest season, when there a large number of seasonal workers are hired, particularly women, who are not usually seen as an integral part of the coffee business.

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Notes

- 1 “A construção da cidadania feminina foi árdua, deteriorante e ao mesmo tempo gratificante ao longo dos anos. Sucessivos processos na luta pela igualdade de gênero e reconhecimento dos direitos femininos foram travados. Contudo, aos poucos, as mulheres foram conquistando seus direitos e conseguindo sua libertação.”
- 2 “As mulheres tornaram-se membros ativos dos seus sindicatos durante os anos da guerra, mas isto não as beneficiou de maneira alguma após a guerra, quando as direções retornaram à divisão sexual do trabalho do pré-guerra”.