

**Public Policies Implemented in Ecuador for the Fulfillment of SDG 8 (2017–2024)**

Políticas Públicas implementadas en Ecuador para el cumplimiento del ODS 8 (2017-2024)

**Kristhel Anamille Agurto Ponce**  
Universidad Técnica de Machala, Ecuador  
[krisagurto06@gmail.com](mailto:krisagurto06@gmail.com)  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6614-1619>**Virgilio Eduardo Salcedo Muñoz**  
Universidad Técnica de Machala, Ecuador  
[virgilioalcedomunoz2@gmail.com](mailto:virgilioalcedomunoz2@gmail.com)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9821-3722>

Recibido: 5/5/2025

Aceptado: 18/6/2025

Publicado: 30/6/2025

**Autor corresponsal:****Kristhel Anamille Agurto Ponce**  
[krisagurto06@gmail.com](mailto:krisagurto06@gmail.com)**Cómo citar:**Agurto Ponce, K. A., Salcedo Muñoz, V. E. (2025). Public Policies Implemented in Ecuador for the Fulfillment of SDG 8 (2017–2024). *Integración*, 9(1), 23-34. <https://doi.org/10.36881/ri.v9i1.1128>**Fuente de financiamiento:** No financiado.**Declaración de conflictos de interés:** Los autores declaran no tener conflictos de interés**Resumen**

La promoción del trabajo decente y el crecimiento económico sostenido constituye uno de los principales desafíos para los países en desarrollo en el marco de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS). En Ecuador, el ODS 8 ha sido incorporado progresivamente en diversas políticas públicas entre 2017 y 2024, aunque persisten brechas significativas en el mercado laboral. Este estudio tiene como objetivo describir y analizar el comportamiento de indicadores clave asociados al empleo digno y al crecimiento económico, en relación con las políticas implementadas durante los gobiernos de Lenín Moreno, Guillermo Lasso y Daniel Noboa. La investigación adopta un enfoque cuantitativo de tipo descriptivo y comparativo, utilizando estadística descriptiva sobre datos secundarios obtenidos del Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC) y del Banco Central del Ecuador. Se analizan planes estratégicos como “Toda una Vida”, la Política de Reactivación Económica Post-COVID, el “Plan de Creación de Oportunidades” y el “Plan de Desarrollo para el Nuevo Ecuador”, con énfasis en sectores como la agricultura, el turismo y la tecnología. Entre los principales hallazgos se identifican mejoras en el empleo adecuado, una disminución del subempleo y avances en programas de capacitación laboral. No obstante, se mantienen brechas estructurales de género y territorio, así como limitaciones en la cobertura y sostenibilidad fiscal de los programas. Se concluye que el cumplimiento del ODS 8 en Ecuador requiere una articulación más eficiente entre actores públicos y privados, un enfoque territorial inclusivo y mayor inversión en innovación y protección social.

**Palabras claves:** ODS 8, políticas públicas, Ecuador, empleo digno, crecimiento económico, sostenibilidad..

**Abstract**

The promotion of decent work and sustained economic growth constitutes one of the main challenges for developing countries within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Ecuador, SDG 8 has been progressively incorporated into various public policies between 2017 and 2024, although significant gaps persist in the labor market. This study aims to describe and analyze the behavior of key indicators associated with decent employment and economic growth in relation to the policies implemented during the governments of Lenín Moreno, Guillermo Lasso, and Daniel Noboa. The research adopts a descriptive and comparative quantitative approach, using descriptive statistics on secondary data obtained from the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) and the Central Bank of Ecuador. Strategic plans such as "Toda una Vida" (A Whole Life), the Post-COVID Economic Recovery Policy, the "Plan for the Creation of Opportunities," and the "Development Plan for the New Ecuador" are analyzed, with an emphasis on sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and technology. Among the main findings are improvements in adequate employment, a decrease in underemployment, and progress in job training programs. However, structural gender and territorial gaps persist, as well as limitations in the coverage and fiscal sustainability of programs. The conclusion is that achieving SDG 8 in Ecuador requires more efficient coordination between public and private actors, an inclusive territorial approach, and greater investment in innovation and social protection.

**Keywords:** SDG 8, public policies, Ecuador, decent employment, economic growth, sustainability.

**OPEN ACCESS**  
Distribuido bajo:

## Introduction

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015, represents a strategic commitment for countries seeking to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure the well-being of their populations. In this context, SDG 8, which promotes decent work and sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, takes on special relevance due to its direct impact on quality of life and social cohesion.

In Ecuador, this goal has been progressively incorporated into the design of public policies aimed at improving the labor market, reducing informality, and fostering equitable economic development. Regulatory documents such as the 2008 Constitution and the 2005 Labor Code establish a legal framework that supports these efforts, especially for historically excluded sectors, such as youth, women, and rural communities. However, structural limitations persist that hinder the consolidation of a decent and sustainable labor market.

Between 2017 and 2024, Ecuador has faced diverse political and economic contexts, including the crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, which widened employment gaps and reduced job stability. Despite efforts through plans such as "Toda una Vida," the Economic Reactivation Policy, and the "Development Plan for the New Ecuador," problems such as territorial inequality, low coverage of social programs, and the State's fiscal weakness persist.

This overview reveals a central problem: although policies with objectives aligned with SDG 8 have been implemented, there is insufficient clarity regarding their real impact on improving working conditions in the country. Current literature presents a limited systematization of these policies from a comparative and quantitative perspective, creating a gap in the evaluation of their effects on employment and economic growth.

Within this framework, this study aims to analyze the public policies implemented in Ecuador during this period, in order to characterize their orientation and connection with the objectives of SDG 8, based on the analysis of relevant labor and economic indicators. Using a quantitative and descriptive approach, it seeks to identify patterns, progress, and limitations observed in the behavior of the labor market between 2017 and

2024. The study aims to provide useful evidence for the formulation of more inclusive, sustainable, and territorially balanced public policies, in line with the principles of decent work and sustainable economic growth

## Theoretical Review

### Public Policies in Ecuador Related to SDG 8

The Ecuadorian regulatory framework provides a solid foundation for promoting decent employment and achieving SDG 8. The Constitution recognizes work as a fundamental right and a social duty, guaranteeing its protection and promotion as a pillar of the economy. Article 33 defines work as "the source of personal fulfillment and the foundation of the economy," while Article 326 establishes guiding principles such as equal pay, job security, and non-discrimination in employment.

Additionally, the Labor Code regulates essential aspects of the employment relationship, highlighting in Article 81 the obligation to guarantee a decent wage that covers the basic needs of workers and their families. Article 169 also protects employees against unjustified dismissals, which strengthens job security and fosters a fair work environment (National Assembly of Ecuador, 2005).

The interaction between these regulatory provisions reflects the Ecuadorian State's intention to align its labor legislation with the principles of economic sustainability and social justice promoted by the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the participation of international actors, such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), is highlighted. Their influence has been decisive in the incorporation of advanced labor standards aligned with global standards for decent employment.

During the 2017-2024 period, Ecuador developed and implemented various public policies aimed at improving the quality of life of its population and strengthening key sectors such as social development, the economy, education, and the environment. These policies have been designed to address specific problems and promote sustainable development in the country.

Table 1 presents a summary of the main public policies implemented in Ecuador during this period:

**Table 1.**  
*Public policies aimed at achieving SDG 8 (2017–2024)*

Public Policies	Description	Source
National Development Plan 2017-2021 'A Whole Life'	Seeks to plan development, eradicate poverty, promote sustainability, and redistribute resources to ensure good living.	National Planning Secretariat of Ecuador (2017)
Intersectoral Food and Nutrition Plan of Ecuador 2018-2025.	The Ecuadorian State and society have the responsibility to combat malnutrition at all stages of life, through actions that address the determinants of health.	Ministry of Public Health of Ecuador (2018)
Opportunity Creation Plan 2021-2025	Defines the national priorities for the established period, in accordance with the 2021-2025 Government Plan and the 2030 Agenda.	National Planning Secretariat of Ecuador (2021)
National Agenda for Intergenerational Equality 2021-2025.	Includes a normative and conceptual review to establish a rights-based, equality-based, and non-discrimination approach.	National Council for Intergenerational Equality (2022)
Institutional Strategic Plan 2021-2025	Guides public management to improve and articulate higher education with science, technology, innovation, and ancestral knowledge, strengthening capacities and generating knowledge.	Secretariat of Higher Education (2022)
Public Policy on Social Rehabilitation 2022-2025:	Guarantee access to human rights for persons deprived of liberty, considering that confinement, by separating them from the outside world, limits their self-determination and freedom.	Ministry of Human Rights of Ecuador (2022)
Public Policy on Telecommunications and the Information Society 2023-2025	The State has the right to manage, regulate, and control telecommunications and the radio spectrum, including the issuance of mandatory policies, plans, and standards.	Ministry of Telecommunications of Ecuador (2023)
Development Plan for the New Ecuador 2024-2025	Guarantees the right to citizen participation through workshops, discussions, meetings, and digital channels, integrating academia, governments, the private sector, and civil society to address economic and social challenges.	National Planning Secretariat of Ecuador (2023)

The National Development Plan (NDP) constitutes fundamental instruments for the implementation of public policies aligned with SDG 8. economic growth. Table 2 below presents a comparative table detailing the key policies implemented during each term:

Each presidential term has defined specific strategies to promote decent employment and sustainable

**Table 2.**  
*Presidential Public Policies*

President	Period - PND	Focus on Public Policies Related to SDG 8	Source
Lenin Moreno	2017-2021	outh labor inclusion, reduction of informal employment through programs such as "Youth Employment" and employment subsidies in the context of the crisis.	Medina (2016)
Guillermo Lasso	2021-2023	Technological innovation and digitalization of the labor market. Focus on attracting investment and strengthening the digital economy.	World Bank Group (2024)
Daniel Noboa	2023-2025 (proposal)	Focus on economic sustainability, inclusive employment generation, and rural development.	National Planning Secretariat of Ecuador (2023)

The 2017-2021 National Development Plan (PND) focused on reducing informal employment, promoting youth labor inclusion, and strengthening social protection. It also introduced labor subsidies to mitigate the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan also included programs to strengthen the popular and solidarity economy, a key sector for job creation in vulnerable communities (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2021).

The 2021-2023 National Development Plan (PND), promoted by Guillermo Lasso, prioritized the digitalization of the labor market and the implementation of financial technology strategies to improve access to credit and formalize informal employment. In this context, initiatives such as "Digital Ecuador" were launched, which enabled the training of workers in digital skills and encouraged the creation of technology startups. As a result, employment in the technology sector grew by 10% between 2021 and 2023 (World Bank Group, 2024).

Finally, the 2023-2025 National Development Plan (PND), led by Daniel Noboa, proposes a renewed focus on economic and social sustainability. This plan prioritizes the inclusion of rural communities, promoting partnerships and access to financing for small entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it proposes significant investments in productive infrastructure and job training programs, focusing especially on women and youth, with the aim of reducing sectoral inequalities (National Planning Secretariat of Ecuador, 2023).

### **Relationship between Economic Growth and Decent Employment in Ecuador**

Inclusive economic growth is essential to guarantee access to decent employment. However, this growth must be complemented by effective public policies for training and development that allow workers to access quality employment opportunities. Authors Carvajal & Zambrano (2023) indicate that sustainable economic development involves not only increasing macroeconomic indicators but also ensuring that the benefits of growth reach the most disadvantaged populations. In Ecuador, this relationship has been addressed through the prioritization of strategic sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and information technology, which seek to diversify the economic base and reduce dependence on oil, a historically dominant sector in the country.

In addition, the agricultural sector plays a key role in labor inclusion, especially in rural areas, where a

significant portion of the economically active population is concentrated. In 2021, agricultural exports generated more than \$7 billion, with products such as bananas and cocoa standing out as the main sources of income (World Bank Group, 2021). Initiatives such as strengthening agricultural value chains have not only generated formal employment but also contributed to poverty reduction in rural areas. Furthermore, training programs in sustainable farming techniques and access to financing have increased agricultural productivity by 15% in the last five years, demonstrating how ongoing training improves both productivity and working conditions in this sector (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Ecuador, 2020).

Likewise, tourism has established itself as another key sector in the Ecuadorian economy. This sector generated more than 300,000 direct jobs in 2022, representing 3% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). López, Yaulema, Flores, & Vega (2024) argue that the implementation of sustainable tourism routes and the promotion of rural destinations have significantly increased the income of local communities. The "Ecuador Potencia Turística" program, launched in 2021, attracted more than \$500 million in infrastructure and marketing investments, resulting in a 25% increase in international tourist arrivals in 2022. This approach not only strengthens the economy but also promotes Ecuadorian culture and contributes to the creation of sustainable jobs in rural areas.

Likewise, the technology sector in Ecuador has also shown sustained growth, supported by public policies that encourage the development of human talent and the development of digital infrastructure. In 2022, this sector contributed 2.5% of Ecuador's GDP and generated more than 80,000 formal jobs (National Institute of Statistics and Census, 2022). Initiatives such as programming training programs, which have trained more than 10,000 professionals since 2019 (Ministry of Telecommunications of Ecuador, 2023), and the creation of technology free zones, have allowed Ecuador to position itself as an emerging hub in digital innovation. However, challenges persist, such as the technology access gap in rural areas, which limits the potential of key sectors and requires additional investments in infrastructure and connectivity.

Similarly, technological innovation is a fundamental pillar of productive development policies in Ecuador. (Recalde, Soledispa, Merizalde, Muñoz, & Ortega, 2024) emphasizes that policies focused on research and development (R&D) are essential to improve competitiveness and create products with greater added

value. The Ecuadorian government has encouraged the creation of technology parks and innovation clusters, but continued efforts are still needed to strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors in order to better exploit the opportunities offered by innovation.

Finally, sustainability has taken on increasing importance within productive development policies in Ecuador. Vergara (2023) emphasizes that the integration of sustainable practices in productive sectors not only responds to global demands for sustainability but also opens up new economic opportunities. In sectors such as agriculture and mining, the government has begun to implement environmentally responsible practices, which improves the country's international image and contributes to the conservation of natural resources. The transition to a green economy is seen as a way to ensure Ecuador's long-term economic development.

### **Productive Development Policies in Ecuador**

Productive development policies are key to the economic development of any country, as they seek to generate a favorable environment for investment, employment, and competitiveness. De la Torre (2018) points out that these policies are designed to strengthen strategic sectors of the economy, such as manufacturing, agriculture, and services. Through tax incentives, training programs, and support for innovation, they seek to boost production and improve product quality, facilitating greater participation in international markets.

In Ecuador's case, economic diversification has been one of the main objectives. Astudillo (2021) argues that dependence on oil has limited the country's sustained growth, making it essential to boost other sectors. This diversification reduces vulnerability to commodity price fluctuations and promotes macroeconomic stability. Policies focused on agribusiness, tourism, and technology have begun to transform the country's productive base, although structural challenges persist.

The role of the State has been decisive in the design and implementation of public policies that favor competitiveness. Bonilla et al. (2021) argue that the government has promoted the attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) and the strengthening of domestic capacities to generate products with greater added value. However, the impact of these initiatives has been uneven. Although tax incentives and training programs have shown positive results, the lack of adequate infrastructure and political instability continue to be significant barriers.

One of the greatest challenges in Ecuador is the effective implementation of these policies. Camacho (2022) warns that state bureaucracy and poor infrastructure hinder the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, the lack of inter-institutional coordination limits the effectiveness of government strategies, thus restricting opportunities for local development.

Innovation is another fundamental aspect of productive development policies in Ecuador. Recalde, Soledispa, Merizalde, Muñoz, & Ortega (2024) highlight that research and development (R&D) policies are crucial for increasing competitiveness and creating value-added products. The Ecuadorian government has encouraged the creation of technology parks and innovation clusters, but more work remains to be done in terms of collaboration between the public and private sectors to promote research and development of new technologies.

In Ecuador, sustainability has taken a leading role in productive development policies, establishing a balance between economic development and environmental responsibility. According to Vergara (2023), the incorporation of sustainable practices not only responds to global demands but also boosts economic opportunities by improving the country's competitiveness. Key sectors such as agriculture and mining already implement responsible strategies, such as the use of techniques that regenerate soils and reduce chemical inputs, or cleaner extraction methods that lessen environmental impact. These practices contribute both to the preservation of natural resources and to Ecuador's international position as a benchmark in sustainable development.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a descriptive, quantitative approach aimed at characterizing the behavior of labor and economic indicators in Ecuador between 2017 and 2024, in relation to the public policies implemented to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8). According to Romero et al. (2022), this approach allows for the analysis of social phenomena through numerical data, facilitating the identification of patterns and trends without establishing causal relationships.

The study, based on Valles's (1999) theoretical approach to comparative analysis in the social sciences, employs the comparative method to analyze public policies implemented during the administrations of



Lenin Moreno, Guillermo Lasso, and Daniel Noboa. This method not only allows for the identification of common patterns and differences in public management but also facilitates the evaluation of their impact in specific contexts. This method is particularly useful for comparing strategies and outcomes in terms of promoting decent employment and inclusive economic growth, highlighting the variations in the approaches and achievements of each administration.

The technique used is descriptive statistics, which, according to Rendón et al. (2016), allows the data obtained to be presented graphically and summarized in tables. The statistical data will be collected from administrative agencies such as the SRI (Institutional Revenue Service) and the Central Bank of Ecuador.

Table 3 shows the variables and indicators analyzed below:

**Table 3.**  
*Indicators analyzed*

Main variable	Analyzed indicators	Source
Employment and Quality of Work	Adequate Employment (%), Underemployment (%), Unemployment (%)	INEC
Economic growth	Annual real GDP variation (%)	Central Bank of Ecuador
Structural gaps	Employment by gender (%), Employment by geographical area (%)	INEC

The design to be implemented is non-experimental. As stated by Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista (2014), non-experimental research is carried out without intentional manipulation of variables, as it is limited to observing phenomena as they occur in their natural context, for the purpose of subsequent analysis.

## Results

During the period 2017–2024, Ecuador implemented a series of public policies aligned with SDG 8, focused on promoting decent work and sustained economic growth. These policies were implemented through national development plans and sectoral strategies framed within the 2030 Agenda.

**Table 4.**  
*Public policies aimed at achieving SDG 8 (2017–2024)*

President	Public policy	Axes of SDG 8	Source
Lenin Moreno 2017-2021	“A Lifetime” Plan	Youth employment, popular economy, social protection	National Planning Secretariat of Ecuador (2017)
Lenin Moreno 2020-2022	Post-COVID Economic Recovery Policy	Labor subsidies, informal employment, economic recovery	World Bank Group (2021)
Guillermo Lasso 2021-2023	Opportunity Creation Plan	Digitalization, technological training, FDI attraction	National Planning Secretariat of Ecuador (2021)
Guillermo Lasso / Daniel Noboa 2021-2025	National Agenda for Intergenerational Equality	Gender equality, intergenerational labor rights	National Council for Intergenerational Equality (2022)
Daniel Noboa 2024-2025	Development Plan for the New Ecuador	Rural employment, associativity inclusive training	National Planning Secretariat of Ecuador (2023)

It reflects a set of public policies designed to address the objectives of SDG 8 from different perspectives, depending on the social and economic context of each administration. During Lenin Moreno's term (2017–2021), the *Toda una Vida* plan stood out, focusing on youth employment, the popular economy, and social protection. This policy represented a structured response to the need to incorporate young people into the labor market through incentives such as subsidies and first-time job programs (National Planning Secretariat of Ecuador, 2017). Furthermore, the implementation of the Post-COVID Economic Recovery Policy was essential to mitigate the effects of the pandemic through temporary subsidies and measures to formalize informal activities (World Bank Group, 2021).

During Guillermo Lasso's administration (2021–2023), the Opportunity Creation Plan deepened its focus on the digitalization of employment, attracting foreign direct investment, and strengthening the entrepreneurial

ecosystem. Digital platforms were promoted to facilitate access to job openings and technical training processes, in line with global digital transformation trends. According to the World Bank Group (2024), these actions contributed to improving labor formalization, especially in the technology and digital services sectors.

With the arrival of Daniel Noboa (2024–2025), public policies shifted toward rural inclusion and economic sustainability. His Development Plan for the New Ecuador aims to reduce territorial inequalities through productive partnerships, financial inclusion, and training programs aimed at rural women and youth. These strategies coincide with what was proposed by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2021), which indicates that strengthening the rural productive fabric and territorial inclusion are key factors in closing structural gaps in employment.

**Table 5.**  
*Labor market indicators in Ecuador (2017–2024)*

*Nota. El dato correspondiente a 2024 es una proyección del INEC.*

Year	Employment (%)	Underemployment (%)	Unemployment (%)
2017	41,1	18,5	4,1
2018	40,2	18,0	3,7
2019	38,5	17,6	3,8
2020	30,0	23,3	5,2
2021	32,5	23,2	5,2
2022	34,4	22,2	4,4
2023	36,3	19,6	3,8
2024*	37,0	19,0	4,0

*Note: The data for 2024 is a projection by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC).*  
*Source: INEC (2023)*

The evolution of labor indicators between 2017 and 2024 clearly reflects the impact of external events and the relative effectiveness of the policies implemented. The drop in adequate employment to 30% in 2020 was a direct consequence of the lockdown and economic contraction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This phenomenon has been described by ECLAC (2021) as having a critical impact on Latin American economies with high levels of labor informality, including Ecuador.

This scenario exacerbated labor informality, evidenced by the increase in underemployment to 23.3%, and raised unemployment to its peak of 5.2%.

As of 2021, data show a moderate recovery of adequate employment, reaching 37.0% in 2024, driven by policies such as the provision of temporary subsidies for formal employment, the reactivation of key economic sectors such as tourism and agriculture, and digital tra-

ining programs. In this context, Carvajal and Zambrano (2023) highlight that the strengthening of strategic sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and technology has been decisive for labor inclusion and sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, the 4.3 percentage point decrease in underemployment indicates that some informal workers managed to improve their working conditions, accessing more stable jobs with acceptable incomes. Although these figures demonstrate progress, they also reflect a slow structural recovery, in which informality remains the dominant characteristic of the Ecuadorian labor market.

### Structural gaps: gender and territory

Despite inclusion policies, structural inequalities persist, particularly in female and rural employment.

**Table 6.**

*Adequate employment gaps by gender and area (2023)*

Category	Employment (%)
Men	45,0
Women	29,1
Urban	45,0
Rural	19,5

*Source: INEC (2023)*

There is evidence of persistent structural inequality in access to adequate employment by gender and geographic area. While 45% of men accessed adequate employment in 2023, only 29.1% of women did so, representing a gap of almost 16 percentage points. This disparity not only reflects workplace discrimination but also the disproportionate burden of unpaid work that falls on women, as well as their underrepresentation in more technically advanced and better-paid sectors. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, n.d.), this inequality is strongly related to structural barriers such as the lack of care services, the wage gap, and exclusion in STEM fields.

At the territorial level, the differences are even more marked. In urban areas, adequate employment reached 45%, while in rural areas it barely reached 19.5%, evidencing a gap of more than 25 percentage points. Vergara (2023) indicates that rural areas in Ecuador face historical limitations in terms of access to infrastructure, connectivity, and productive financing. Furthermore, Bonilla, Viera, and Caicedo (2021) suggest that it is

essential to implement differentiated policies to reduce regional gaps in the labor market.

### Macroeconomic Relationship and Fiscal Capacity

The implementation of effective public policies requires a favorable economic environment. The evolution of real GDP is shown below:

**Table 7.**

*Real GDP growth in Ecuador (2017–2024)*

Year	GDP growth (%)
2017	2,4
2018	1,3
2019	0,1
2020	-7,8
2021	4,2
2022	2,95
2023	2,64
2024*	1,0

*Note: The 2024 figure is a projection by the Central Bank of Ecuador.*

*Source: Central Bank of Ecuador (2023)*

Table 7 shows the evolution of Ecuador's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in a context marked by the economic slowdown and the effects of the pandemic. Starting with modest growth in 2017 (2.4%), the economy entered a downward trend that culminated in a severe contraction of -7.8% in 2020, the sharpest in decades. This decline forced the State to adopt emergency measures to reactivate the economy and mitigate massive job losses. According to the Central Bank of Ecuador (2023), this contraction was the result of a combination of the paralysis of productive activities and the fall in tax revenues, which highlighted the structural vulnerability of the Ecuadorian economy to external shocks.

In this context, several labor programs aimed at reducing unemployment and promoting training were reactivated. These include "Empleo Joven," which provided incentives to companies to hire young people; "Mi Primer Empleo," which focused on providing work experience to recent graduates; and "Socio Empleo," a public job board that facilitated job placement. Furthermore, the "Capacitate Ecuador" program promoted free technical training in areas in demand by the market, while "Manos a la Obra" (Get Yourself to Work) encouraged self-employment by financing small businesses. According to Medina (2016), these



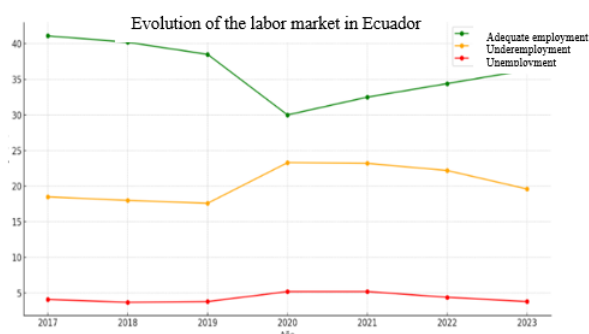
types of active youth employment policies have been fundamental in Ecuador for facilitating labor insertion and reducing gaps in access to formal employment among young people.

The Dual Training Program, promoted by the Ministry of Labor, combined theoretical and practical training in companies, allowing young people to acquire experience and job skills. The Impulso Joven Program, aimed at entrepreneurs under 30 years of age, was also implemented, providing non-reimbursable funds and technical assistance. The Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES), for its part, implemented productive support voucher programs for people living in poverty, facilitating their economic integration through entrepreneurship. Martínez & Espinoza (2016) affirm that dual training in Ecuador represents an effective tool for integrating young people into the labor market, as it allows for the integration of technical educational processes with practical experiences, which improves their employability and productivity.

Although these programs helped contain the rise in unemployment following the pandemic and fostered a partial recovery of adequate employment, their coverage was limited, and their sustainability depends on the country's fiscal stability. The projected GDP slowdown to 1.0% in 2024 reflects that, despite the initial recovery, the fiscal space to maintain or expand these programs is narrow. This implies that, to sustain the gains in employment, it will be necessary to reorient policies toward greater efficiency in public spending and better coordination with the private sector.

**Chart 1.**

*Evolution of the labor market in Ecuador (2017–2024)*



*Source: Central Bank of Ecuador (2022).*

Significant changes are observed in the evolution of employment, underemployment, and unemployment, as shown in Figure 1. The decline in adequate employment

in 2020 reflects the strong impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on formal employment. A steady recovery has been observed since 2021 thanks to public reactivation policies, subsidies, and job training. (Central Bank of Ecuador, 2022)

Underemployment, which represents those who work fewer hours or with low incomes, increased in 2020 to 23.3% as a result of the informalization of employment during the health crisis. This situation was particularly felt by informal sector workers and the self-employed, who experienced economic instability and insecurity. Rivera (2022) highlights that many workers reported losing income, reducing their hours, or changing jobs to survive, reflecting a generalized deterioration in the quality of employment. However, since 2021, it has steadily declined, reaching a projected 19.0% by 2024. This change suggests that strategies to strengthen production and support entrepreneurship have begun to yield results.

Unemployment also reached its highest point in 2020, at 5.2%, due to the halt in productive activities and the loss of formal jobs. It subsequently fell to 3.8% in 2023, with a slight increase projected to 4.0% by 2024, influenced by the slowdown in economic growth. According to Salazar (2021), the health crisis exacerbated the structural weaknesses of the Ecuadorian labor market, generating an uneven and limited recovery, especially among women and young people. This reflects the fact that, although more people are employed, job stability still depends on a favorable macroeconomic environment.

## Discussion

The public policies implemented in Ecuador between 2017 and 2024 reflect a significant effort by the State to align its economic structure with SDG 8, which promotes decent work and sustainable economic growth. According to Salazar Cobena (2021), these measures included labor subsidies and digital training programs, especially aimed at young people and vulnerable groups. The progressive incorporation of strategies focused on strengthening formal employment has allowed indicators such as adequate employment and underemployment to show a moderate recovery since 2021, despite the adverse effects of the pandemic. However, the author warns that significant gaps persist, especially in rural areas and in women's labor force participation, demonstrating that progress has not been sufficient to achieve full labor inclusion.

From an affirmative perspective, Bonilla, Viera, and Caicedo (2021) highlight that foreign direct investment, driven by tax incentives and development programs, has stimulated job creation in strategic sectors such as industry, tourism, and information technology. This view recognizes that the policies implemented have managed to attract capital, improve productivity, and boost labor formalization, especially in urban areas. Initiatives such as "Digital Ecuador" and technology training programs have enabled more than 10,000 people to gain programming and digital skills training, thus expanding their opportunities for formal employment with better conditions.

In contrast, Camacho (2022) adopts a critical stance, pointing out that, although public policies with a social and economic focus have been created, their implementation has been limited by structural barriers such as institutional instability, excessive bureaucracy, and a lack of technical oversight. This perspective highlights that, despite the existence of plans and programs, their impact has been uneven and, in many cases, marginal for the most vulnerable groups, especially in rural areas where informality and unemployment remain high. Furthermore, the lack of infrastructure and technological connectivity limits the effectiveness of training policies, affecting productive inclusion in areas far from urban centers.

A neutral stance is presented by Carlos de la Torre (2018), who acknowledges that policies have generated important advances in access to economic opportunities, but also warns that these have not been sufficient to reconfigure the productive structure or significantly reduce labor informality. This view considers that economic growth has not always translated into structural labor improvements due to weak coordination between the public and private sectors and the lack of a solid institutional framework. Dependence on volatile sectors such as oil, coupled with limited economic diversification, has restricted the creation of sustainable, quality jobs.

On the other hand, the Human Development Bond (BDH) has played a key role in social protection, helping to reduce extreme poverty. However, as ECLAC (2021) warns, its impact on formal employment generation is limited, as it is not necessarily linked to job training or productive integration programs. This indicates that, although the BDH has been crucial as a social containment policy, it should be complemented by more active initiatives that promote economic empowerment,

such as dual training, financing for productive ventures, and youth employment programs, which allow beneficiaries to escape the cycle of welfare dependency.

Ecuador has developed multiple plans and strategies aimed at achieving SDG 8 between 2017 and 2024, such as the National Development Plan, the Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery Policy, and the Opportunity Creation Plan. These have contributed to reducing underemployment, strengthening formal employment, and providing job training, especially in sectors such as technology, agriculture, and tourism. However, the data analyzed show that significant structural challenges persist, such as the adequate employment gap between urban and rural areas (45.0% vs. 19.5% in 2023) and gender inequality in access to formal employment (29.1% for women vs. 45.0% for men), as well as fiscal constraints to sustain long-term programs. These results indicate that, while partial progress has been made in terms of coverage and targeting, policy reformulation with a territorial and inclusive approach is still needed.

It is essential to strengthen institutional capacities, improve intergovernmental coordination, and ensure that policies adopt an inclusive, sustainable, and territorial approach. It is also essential to ensure that the benefits of these policies reach the most vulnerable populations, such as women, youth, rural people, and indigenous populations. The future of decent employment in the country depends on a more comprehensive strategy that combines social protection programs with innovation, access to credit, technical training, and environmental sustainability.

Only through an inter-institutional, multi-sectoral approach with a long-term vision will it be possible to consolidate a more resilient economy and a truly decent labor market. Achieving SDG 8 requires not only political will, but also a deep commitment to equity, investment in human talent, and the development of productive capacities in all corners of the country.

## Conclusion

The results obtained in this study allow us to conclude that between 2017 and 2024, Ecuador implemented various public policies aimed at achieving SDG 8, with an emphasis on employment formalization, job training, and the revitalization of strategic sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and technology. Quantifiable progress is evident, such as the increase in adequate employment from 30% in 2020 to 37% in 2024, and the

reduction in underemployment from 23.3% to 19.0% over the same period, suggesting a relative improvement in the quality of employment.

However, significant structural limitations also persist. The analysis of territorial and gender gaps shows that in 2023, adequate employment reached only 29.1% for women compared to 45% for men, and was 19.5% in rural areas compared to 45% in urban areas. These inequalities reveal that, despite the design of policies with an inclusive approach, their implementation has been uneven and with low coverage in the most vulnerable sectors. Furthermore, the State's limited fiscal capacity and economic instability affect the long-term sustainability of the programs.

Furthermore, because this research used a descriptive quantitative approach based on secondary sources, no specific indicators were developed to directly assess the effectiveness or causal impact of public policies.

Therefore, the results are limited to characterizing general labor market trends and patterns, without offering conclusive evaluative inferences.

To strengthen compliance with SDG 8 in Ecuador, the findings of this study suggest the need to consolidate public strategies with greater coverage, an inclusive territorial approach, and inter-institutional coordination, especially those aimed at closing the structural gaps in gender, informality, and regional inequality identified in the 2017–2024 period.

Consequently, it is recommended that future studies complement this analysis with mixed methodologies that incorporate more precise measurement tools, beneficiary surveys, and statistical impact analyses. Likewise, it is crucial that future public policies integrate differentiated territorial approaches, accompanied by investment in infrastructure, innovation, and monitoring mechanisms that guarantee their effectiveness and sustainability.

## References

- Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador. (2005). *Código del Trabajo*. Obtenido de [https://www.ces.gob.ec/lotaip/2020/Junio/Literal\\_a2/C%C3%B3digo%20del%20Trabajo.pdf](https://www.ces.gob.ec/lotaip/2020/Junio/Literal_a2/C%C3%B3digo%20del%20Trabajo.pdf)
- Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador. (2008). *Constitución de la República del Ecuador*. Obtenido de [https://www.defensa.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2021/02/Constitucion-de-la-Republica-del-Ecuador\\_act\\_ene-2021.pdf](https://www.defensa.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2021/02/Constitucion-de-la-Republica-del-Ecuador_act_ene-2021.pdf)
- Astudillo, P. (2021). *Diversificación Económica del Ecuador*. Quito: Grupo Faro. Obtenido de <https://grupofaro.org/analisis/diversificacion-economica-del-ecuador/>
- Banco Central del Ecuador. (Marzo de 2022). *Informe de la evolución de la economía ecuatoriana en 2021 y perspectivas 2022*. Obtenido de [https://contenido.bce.fin.ec/documentos/Administracion/EvolEconEcu\\_2021pers2022.pdf](https://contenido.bce.fin.ec/documentos/Administracion/EvolEconEcu_2021pers2022.pdf)
- Banco Central del Ecuador. (2023). *Pulso Económico N.º 24, noviembre 2023: Proyecciones macroeconómicas 2024*. Obtenido de <https://contenido.bce.fin.ec/documentos/PublicacionesNotas/Boletines/PulsoEconomico/2023/Nov-24/PulsoEconomico.pdf>
- Bonilla, C. S., Viera, A. J., & Caicedo, A. F. (2021). Inversión extranjera directa: Elementos incluyentes de desarrollo y crecimiento económico del sector industrial. *Digital Publisher*, 6(6). Obtenido de <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/download/articulo/8292876.pdf>
- Camacho, G. S. (2022). *Desafíos para la implementación de la política pública de gestión de riesgos ecuatoriana: un análisis desde las controversias del acatamiento de las normas de construcción*. Quito. Obtenido de <https://repositorio.flacsoandes.edu.ec/bitstream/10469/18176/2/TFLACSO-2022SNCG.pdf>
- Carvajal, C. A., & Zambrano, L. E. (2023). *Desarrollo económico en Ecuador*. Faro. Obtenido de <https://ecuador-decide.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Diagnostico-DesarrolloEconomico-en-Ecuador.pdf>
- Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL). (2021). *Análisis sobre economía popular y solidaria en Ecuador*. Obtenido de Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL): <https://www.cepal.org/es>
- Consejo Nacional para Igualdad Intergeneracional. (2022). *Agenda Nacional para la Igualdad Intergeneracional 2021 - 2025*. Obtenido de [https://www.igualdad.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2022/04/ANII\\_2021-2025-signed.pdf](https://www.igualdad.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2022/04/ANII_2021-2025-signed.pdf)
- De la Torre, C. (18 de Abril de 2018). *Política económica en Ecuador y su capacidad de impacto en el desarrollo*. (C. D. Raza, Entrevistador) Obtenido de <https://revistas.uasb.edu.ec/index.php/eg/article/view/1010/989>
- Grupo Banco Mundial. (2021). *Política de Reactivación Económica Post-COVID-19*. Obtenido de Grupo Banco Mundial: <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/country/ecuador/overview>
- Grupo Banco Mundial. (2024). *Reporte sobre digitalización*

- y empleo en Ecuador. Obtenido de Grupo Banco Mundial: <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/country/ecuador/overview>
- Hernández, S. R., Fernández, C. C., & Baptista, L. M. (2014). *Metodología de la investigación*. Mexico: Mc Graw-Hill. Obtenido de <https://www.esup.edu.pe/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2.%20Hernandez.%20Fernandez%20y%20Baptista-Metodolog%C3%A1a%20Investigacion%20Cientifica%20ta%20ed.pdf>
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC). (2022). *Crecimiento del sector tecnológico en Ecuador*. Obtenido de Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC): <https://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec>
- López, C., Yaulema, L., Flores, E., & Vega, R. (2024). Analisis de la participación del turismo en los ingresos nacionales ecuatoriano durante el periodo 2012-2023. *Aula Virtual Magazine*, 5(12). Obtenido de <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=9600605>
- Martinez, J., & Espinoza, M. (2016). Inserción laboral de los jóvenes con énfasis en la formación dual a nivel nacional. Periodo 2010–2015. *REDI Red de investigadores*.
- Medina, E. L. (2016). Políticas activas de empleo juvenil en el Ecuador. *CAP Jurídica*, 7-14.
- Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería del Ecuador. (2020). *Desarrollo y productividad agrícola en Ecuador*. Obtenido de Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería del Ecuador: <https://www.agricultura.gob.ec>
- Ministerio de Derechos Humanos del Ecuador. (2022). *Política Pública de Rehabilitación Social 2022-2025*. Obtenido de [https://www.derechoshumanos.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/18\\_02.-Politica-Publica-de-Rehabilitacion-Social\\_vF-.pdf](https://www.derechoshumanos.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/18_02.-Politica-Publica-de-Rehabilitacion-Social_vF-.pdf)
- Ministerio de Salud Pública del Ecuador . (2018). *Plan Intersectorial de Alimentación y Nutrición Ecuador 2018-2025*. Obtenido de <https://www.salud.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/PIANE-2018-2025-final-compressed-.pdf>
- Ministerio de Telecomunicaciones del Ecuador. (2023). *Política Pública de Telecomunicaciones y de la Sociedad de la Información 2023-2025*. Obtenido de [https://www.telecomunicaciones.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Pol%C3%81tica-Pu%C3%81blica-Telecomunicaciones-2023-2025-con-ANEXOS-nuevos-signed-signed-signed-signed\\_firmado.pdf](https://www.telecomunicaciones.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Pol%C3%81tica-Pu%C3%81blica-Telecomunicaciones-2023-2025-con-ANEXOS-nuevos-signed-signed-signed-signed_firmado.pdf)
- Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT). (s.f.). *Normas laborales y empleo digno*. Obtenido de Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT): <https://www.ilo.org/global/lang-es/index.htm>
- Recalde, L., Soledispa, M., Merizalde, D., Muñoz, S., & Ortega, Y. (2024). Innovación y competitividad: el papel de la administración en la creación de ventajas competitivas sostenibles. *South Florida Journal of Development*, 5(7). doi:10.46932/sfjdv5n7-032
- Rendón, M., Villasis, M., & Miranda, M. (2016). Estadística descriptiva. *Revista Alergia México*, 63(4), 397-407. Obtenido de <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/4867/486755026009.pdf>
- Rivera, J. (2022). El mercado laboral ecuatoriano y los efectos del Covid-19: percepciones desde los trabajadores. *Revista Investigación y Desarrollo*.
- Romero, H., Real, J., Ordoñez, J., Gavino, G., & Saldarriaga, G. (2022). *Metodología de la investigación*. Quito: ACVENISPROH Académico. doi:10.47606/ACVEN/ACLIB0017
- Salazar, G. (2021). *Covid-19 y mercado laboral ecuatoriano: impacto, esperanzas y oportunidades*. RECIMUNDO.
- Secretaría de Educación Superior, C. T. (2022). *Plan Estratégico Institucional 2021-2025*. Obtenido de <https://www.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Plan-Estrate%CC%81gico-Institucional-2021-2025-Senescyt.pdf>
- Secretaría Nacional de Planificación del Ecuador. (2017). *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2017-2021 'Toda una Vida'*. Obtenido de [https://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2017/11/PLAN-NACIONAL-DE-DESARROLLO-2017-2021\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2017/11/PLAN-NACIONAL-DE-DESARROLLO-2017-2021_compressed.pdf)
- Secretaria Nacional de Planificación del Ecuador. (2021). *Plan de Creación de Oportunidades 2021-2025*. Obtenido de [https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/sites/default/files/plan/files/Plan-de-Creaci%C3%B3n-de-Oportunidades-2021-2025-Aprobado\\_compressed.pdf](https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/sites/default/files/plan/files/Plan-de-Creaci%C3%B3n-de-Oportunidades-2021-2025-Aprobado_compressed.pdf)
- Secretaría Nacional de Planificación del Ecuador. (2023). *Plan de Desarrollo 2024-2025*. Obtenido de <https://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/RESUMEN-PND-ES.pdf>
- Valles, M. (1999). *Técnicas cualitativas de investigación social*. España: Editorian Síntesis. Obtenido de [https://www.trabajosocial.unlp.edu.ar/uploads/docs/valles\\_miguel\\_s\\_tecnicas\\_cualitativas\\_de\\_investigacion\\_social\\_reflexion\\_metodologica\\_y\\_practica\\_profesional\\_.pdf](https://www.trabajosocial.unlp.edu.ar/uploads/docs/valles_miguel_s_tecnicas_cualitativas_de_investigacion_social_reflexion_metodologica_y_practica_profesional_.pdf)
- Vergara, R. A. (2023). *Desarrollo Sostenible y Responsabilidad Social: Análisis de Diferentes Sectores en Ecuador*. Ecuador. Obtenido de <https://libros.ecotec.edu.ec/index.php/editorial/catalog/view/89/109/1223-1>