



SOCIAL MEXICO **UNDER REVIEW**

September 2023

SIGNOS VITALES
EL PULSO DE MÉXICO



Is a non-profit, non governmental organization that is structured by a Council built up of people with an outstanding track record, with high ethical and professional level, which have national and international recognition and with a firm commitment to democratic and freedom principles.

The Council is structured with an Executive Committee, and Advisory Committee of Specialists and a Communication Advisory Committee, and a Executive Director coordinates the operation of these three Committees.

One of the main objectives is the collection of reliable and independent information on the key variables of our economic, political and sociocultural context in order to diagnose, with a good degree of certainty, the state where the country is located.

Vital Signs intends to serve as a light to show the direction that Mexico is taking through the dissemination of quarterly reports, with a national and international scope, to alert society and the policy makers of the wide variety of problems that require special attention.



Weak or absent pulse can have many causes and represents a medical emergency.

The more frequent causes are the heart attack and the shock condition. Heart attack occurs when the heart stops beating. The shock condition occurs when the organism suffers a considerable deterioration, which causes a weak pulse, fast heartbeat, shallow, breathing and loss of consciousness. It can be caused by different factors.

Vital signs weaken and you have to be constantly taking the pulse.

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Image: <https://www.understood.org/es-mx/articles/5-simple-strategies-for-note-taking>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE

Summary

In order to have a complete vision of the social panorama in Mexico, it is necessary to delve deeper into the situation of the significant issues that affect growth and social development in the country, such as poverty reduction, human development, inequality, social mobility, discrimination and oppression of vulnerable groups, educational backwardness, learning losses and conditions that aggravate science, technology, and innovation, as well as deficiencies in health and the health system. Less than a year before the end of this government's term, the negative balances have left a trail of damage that is difficult to repair. The promise of a government that would do

more and better with fewer resources is at odds with the evidence. There are still considerable deficiencies in these sectors where the results have been contrary to expectations, affecting millions of Mexicans' short, medium, and long-term quality of life.

This report provides a diagnosis of the social problems being faced and suffered in the country, which represent an alert for immediate attention and which, in turn, should be part of the work agenda for the incoming government. It is crucial to make it clear that most of the problems afflicting our result from structural processes that have taken root in one way or an-

other over the years and that are determined by the country's growth and development. The participation of the State, private enterprise, and civil society has yielded limited and constrained results. The effect of this process is a continuous mechanism of discrimination and social exclusion, which, far from being reversed, reproduces itself and generates more and greater injustices and challenges.

The first component of the report refers to THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON POVERTY AND INEQUALITY LEVELS. The results indicate that, from 1970 to date, poverty levels have fluctuated by an average of 50%, which means that one out of every two Mexicans has been living in poverty for 52 years, a phenomenon that has not changed since then and that questions the impact of the policies implemented so far.

While practically no government has designed a social policy based on effective access to social rights that emanate from the law, the López Obrador government has magnified the favorable figures while setbacks are minimized. Although the latest available data from Coneval point to a reduction in poverty from 2018 to 2022 as the balance of this government's strategy to combat poverty (reduction of 5.6

percentage points), such reduction in 2022 is due to a decrease in moderate poverty (–5.6 pp), not so for an effort to reduce extreme poverty, which even increased (0.1 pp) and leaves some 400,000 more people in extreme poverty than there were in 2018. The results are somewhat misleading, as they show triumphalism but fail to reduce the population living in extreme poverty. In another analysis, measurements from the UNAM University Program for Development Studies (PUED) indicate that poverty was actually reduced by only 0.1 pp in 2022 compared to the beginning of the administration in 2018.

Poverty reduction aims to be sustainable over time and in the face of catastrophic shocks such as the one that occurred with the Covid–19 health contingency. Unfortunately, the results of the dismantling of the health sector are reflected in the balance of the lack of access to health services. Data for 2022 (latest available data) indicate that 39.1% of Mexicans do not have access to health services, the highest percentage since 2008. More than 30 million people ceased accessing health services from 2018 to 2022 (30.3 million). Although the strategy to combat poverty in Mexico has favored monetary transfers, social programs have a non–transparent, regressive implementation, giving more to those who

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have more and less to those who need it most, and neglecting the quality and availability of essential services.

The fact is that the Mexican State has not made the necessary turnaround in the implementation of social policy, maintaining schemes that reproduce fragmentation as the original sin in a social policy lacking a social rights approach. Thus, in the face of the promise of “First the poor,” the current government has not been able to strengthen or amend the failures in the fight against poverty through institutional capacities. On the contrary, it continues to affect historically vulnerable groups such as women, indigenous people, people with disabilities, or migrants. The results corroborate that the reproduction of fragmentation in social policy violates rights and deepens deprivation. The additional effects caused by the health crisis accumulate more significant disadvantages to face and solve by the authorities and society. The challenge continues, and Mexico’s hope to be better off is still far from being fulfilled.

One of the clear distinctions between this government and the previous ones is the DESTRUCTION OF THE INSTITUTIONS that gave strength and structure to a series of specific programs and objectives. In

Signos Vitales, we have evidenced the constant dismantling of institutions that have affected society differently. Such is the case of the education sector, where the first dismantling occurred with the elimination of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE, for its acronym in Spanish). Thus, the evaluation of educational policy was lost and, with it, the state of national education and the information on basic learning and teacher evaluation.

CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION include, among others, the imminent loss of up to 1.5 years of learning from 2019 to 2021, as well as the increase in learning poverty, that is, the inability of children under 10 to read and understand a text properly or solve 3–digit problems, which deepens educational gaps. It also shows the main problems young people face in today’s Mexico, such as unemployment, access to digital media, increased mental illness, and school dropout despite implementing the Benito Juárez Scholarships. The effects indicate that fewer impoverished students receive support (Becas Benito Juárez) than households received in 2018 with Prospera. The change implies the loss of positive impacts on education, income, economic status, and even within the labor market, specifically for women.

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One of the most worrying challenges is the direction education will take due to the new study plans and programs. From the pedagogical point of view, subjects will be affected in formative fields, blurring mathematics, and reading comprehension and forgetting the evaluation of learning, which leaves a remarkable inability to adapt to a new educational reality (Backhoff, 2021). The content is attached to a specific discursive and philosophical rhetoric and detached from scientific evidence, which puts the learning of an entire generation at risk, which, added to the existing gaps, will mean more and more significant disadvantages.

Teachers, one of education's most critical components, have faced constant changes and uncertainty. The aggravation of teachers has been materialized by republican austerity in budget cuts to teacher training, evaluation, and working conditions. Likewise, with the arrival of the pandemic, resistance to change and innovation was present, as well as challenges in evaluation and accountability. Although the strategy followed was to increase teachers' salaries, there is evidence of inequity and opacity in the teachers' payroll, which, on the one hand, violates their rights and, on the other hand, does not encourage educational quality.

The departure of the government also LEAVES THE SCIENTIFIC FIELD DISMANTLED. The illegality in the processes has shaped the outrages, the disappearance of funds and trusts to centralize decision-making, which, together with the recent approval of the Law on Humanities, Science, Technology, and Innovation (LMHCTI, for its acronym in Spanish), which includes a redefinition of Conacyt (now Conahcyt), have as a result the definition of the scientific agenda and with it, the direction that research will take. The research will be limited to the interests of whomever the President designates, including in the new conformation of the Governing Board, the Secretary of National Defense, and the Secretary of the Navy, which gives a sign of the bias that the new scientific agenda could cause, limiting resources to specific projects, causing, in turn, the rupture of academia with society and the denial of innovation.

Finally, another of the abuses that violate social rights is related to the LACK OF HEALTH SERVICES. In 2022, the number of people without access to health services reached 50.3 million (39.1% of the inhabitants), an increase of 151% or 30 million more, compared to what was reported in 2018. From a historical perspective, reforms implemented over decades show, until before this administration, increases in

From the pedagogical point of view, subjects will be affected in formative fields, blurring mathematics, and reading comprehension and forgetting the evaluation of learning.

Backhoff, 2021

life expectancy and reductions in mortality rates and maternal mortality rates. The advent of COVID-19 and the management of the pandemic resulted in a setback in these fundamental indicators and deepened the lags. The number of consultations granted by public health services has decreased drastically since 2019, ceasing to grant treatments for diseases such as cancer and HIV and backtracking in immunization schemes. Inequalities also reach health personnel, who have faced precarious employment conditions in both the public and private sectors.

Between 2019 and 2020, 20.5% of physicians working in the private sector had an income below or up to 2 minimum wages, 21.3% reported lacking a written contract, 27.8% lacked social benefits, and 43.9% lacked health insurance. These percentages are notably lower for physicians working in the public sector, where 17.1% have an income below or up to 2 minimum wages, 4.1% lack a written contract, 12.1% lack social benefits, and 11.3% lack health insurance. Such labor precariousness implies medium and long-term costs that can affect health and quality of life, limit the possibilities for professional growth of health personnel, and affect the services provided to the population.

In these five years, the government of the 4T has been characterized by the systematic violation of social rights and the promotion and reproduction of inequality schemes that foster vulnerabilities that, although they already existed, were deepened during this administration. Good intentions were left without actions and generated greater gaps without containment.

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Image: Alex Cruz/EFE <https://www.metroworldnews.com/noticias/2022/06/08/mexico-se-posiciona-como-el-quinto-pais-con-mayor-pobreza-en-america-lat>

DYNAMICS **OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY**

POVERTY

between structural and conjunctural

Globally, poverty levels and extreme poverty are the problems that most afflict countries. Such relevance is crucial in the United Nations 2030 Agenda, as it is the first of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched in 2015, which refers to countries reducing poverty in all its forms and dimensions (UN, n.d.1). In the context of social Mexico, there have been modest advances in the fight against poverty and inequality. The levels are like those observed in past decades and high compared to similarly developed countries in Latin America (Rivas and Gaudín, 2021).

As Table 1 shows, Mexico has the highest percentages concerning the incidence rate of poverty globally¹,


¹ The national poverty rate is the percentage of people liv-

ing below the national poverty line. National measures are based on population-weighted subgroup estimates obtained from household surveys (World Bank, n.d.4).

both in the Latin American region and in OECD members. Nationally, there is a significant gap between income quintiles, i.e., the wealthiest 20% of the population in Mexico has an income 11.1 times higher than the poorest 20%, reflecting one of the highest inequality indexes (Gini index²) compared to other countries. Consequently, critical structural gaps persist in Mexico as expressions of the broad inequality that hinders development.

² The Gini coefficient measures income inequality among people. It is based on comparing the cumulative proportions of the population versus the cumulative proportions of the income they receive. It ranges from 0 in the case of perfect equality between population groups to 1 in the case of perfect income inequality (OECD, 2023a).

TABLE 1. INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF POVERTY AND THE GINI INDEX

COUNTRY	REFERENCE YEAR	POVERTY	EXTREME POVERTY	POVERTY INCIDENCE RATE/BASE OF THE NATIONAL POVERTY LINE (% DE LA POBLACIÓN)	RATIO OF AVERAGE PER CAPITA HOUSEHOLD INCOME: QUINTILE V / QUINTILE I	GINI INDEX
LATIN AMERICA	2021	32.3	12.9		12.9	45.4
Argentina	2021			37.3%		
Costa Rica	2021	17.3	3.7	30.0%	14.9	49.3
Bolivia	2021	29	9.9	39.0%	10.2	43.6
Brazil	2021	24.3	8.3		20.1	48.9
Chile	2020	14.2	4.5	10.8%	13.7	44.9
Colombia	2021	35.4	15	42.5%	19.2	54.2
 Mexico	2022	36.3	7.1	43.9%	11.1	45.4
Peru	2021	19.3	4.2	30.1%	10.4	43.8
OECD						
France	2019			13.8%	4.4	29.2
Italy	2020			20.1%	5.9	33.1
Japan	2018				6.2	33.4
Korean Rep.	2020				6.2	33.1
Belgium	2020			12.7%	5.8	27.2
Spain	2020			21.7%	6.1	32.9
Sweden	2021			15.7%	4.3	28.6

Source: In-house elaboration with data from World Bank (n.d.1) and OECD (2023a)

In a recurrent manner and due to the deprivations in access to social rights and economic well-being, Signos Vitales (2022a) has tried to make visible the conditions of poverty in Mexico, resulting in several different scenarios that deepen the deprivations of the population and, therefore, violate the social rights of people. The findings indicate that poverty in Mexico is a historical-structural problem that has had, consequently, at least some of the following effects, which result in a mechanism of constant exclusion:

- * Educational backwardness
- * Lack of access to health services
- * Lack of access to social security
- * Housing of inadequate quality or insufficient space
- * Unavailability of some essential services in housing
- * Lack of access to food (Coneval, s.f.1)

In Mexico, people who have faced situations of poverty usually present at least one of the above deprivations, resulting in an income below the Economic Welfare Line (LBE for its acronym in Spanish), which specifies the income necessary to acquire the food

and non-food baskets of goods and services³. In this group, it is particularly relevant to identify people in extreme poverty, i.e., those whose total income is insufficient even to buy the food basket to satisfy their food needs and who, in addition, have three or more social deprivations, i.e., the poorest of the poor (Coneval, n.d.1).

The dynamics of poverty in Mexico offer a vast and sufficient diagnosis to understand this problem in depth. Teruel (2022) explains poverty levels between 2002 and 2012, a period divided into three periods: a) 2002, b) 2005–2006, and c) 2009–2012⁴; moreover, finds that the Mexican population can be classified into the following groups of similar proportion:

- a. population that is poor at all times;
- b. population that is poor in two of the three periods;

³ Baskets (food and non-food) measure whether the population's income is sufficient to purchase food, goods and services. The composition of food baskets depends on the area for which they are designed (rural or urban) and include different food groups. The non-food basket is made up of goods and services (Coneval, n.d.1).

⁴ Period 1 corresponds to the 2002 National Household Living Standards Survey (MxFLS), period 2 refers to the 2005–2006 MxFLS survey and the third period to the 2009–2012 survey. (Teruel, 2022).

- c. population that is poor in only one of the periods; and,
- d. population that is never poor.

However, even in the last group (those who are never poor), less than one-third can be considered non-poor in two or more periods (Teruel, 2022).

Part of the findings refer to the fact that poverty levels over time were approximately 50% during 2002–2012. 23.9% of the population was poor in the three periods analyzed, which implies that about half of the population in poverty could move out of poverty at any given time. The high levels of mobility in and out of poverty in Mexico suggest, on the one hand, that a large number of households were able to move out of poverty in each period, but on the other hand, that we do not have adequate mechanisms to keep that population out of poverty (Teruel, 2022).

The findings of the analysis within at least these ten years were as follows:

1. Seven of ten Mexicans have experienced multidimensional poverty at least once in the period studied.
2. About 25% of the population was in poverty (chronically poor) in the periods analyzed. At the same

time, one-half of Mexicans moved in and out of poverty at some point (persistent and transitory poor). Within the remaining quarter of the population that was not poor at any time, only one-third was neither poor nor vulnerable in all the periods analyzed.

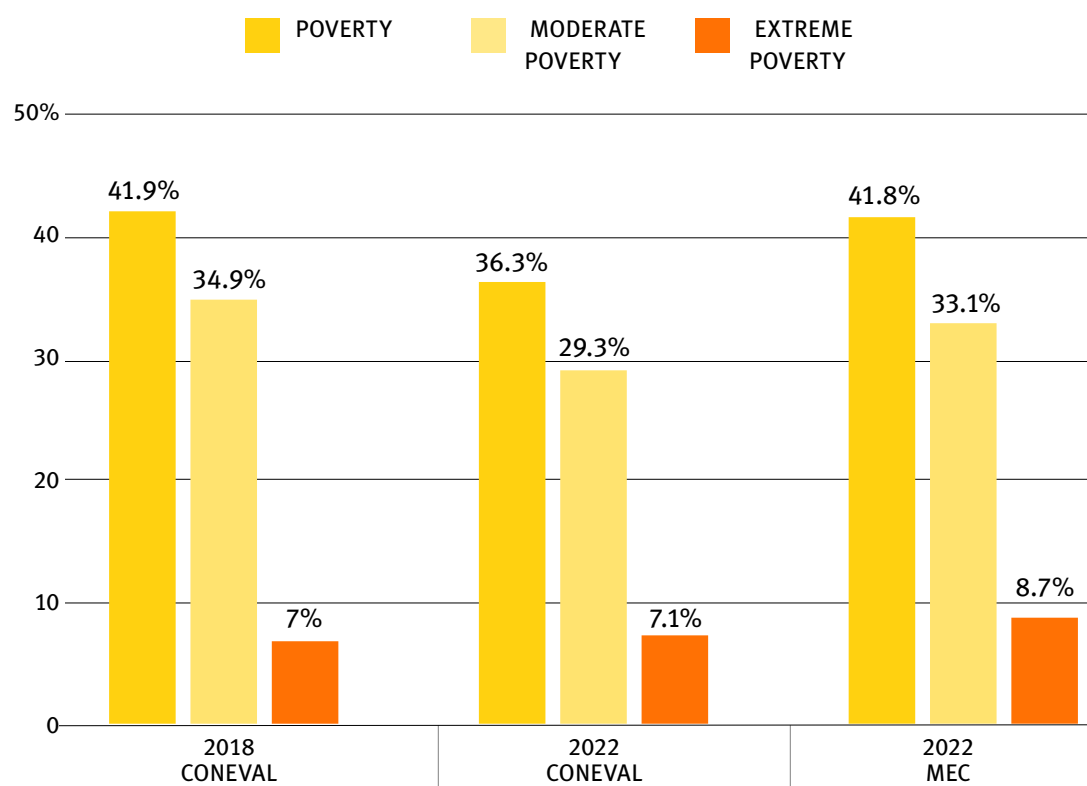
3. There is considerable mobility into and out of poverty. However, this mobility only highlights transitions between poverty and vulnerability, as the frequent relapses into poverty suggest that households that can escape from poverty are at high risk of falling back into poverty, either because of shocks (such as unemployment or illness) or because of structural impossibility (beyond the conditions of the individual) and poverty traps.
4. Regarding the population in extreme poverty, 6.8% were chronically in this situation, which implies that approximately 70% of extreme poverty is chronic and does not move (Teruel, 2022).

The latest data published by Coneval indicates a strong reduction in multidimensional poverty, from 43.9% in 2020 to 36.3% in 2022. There are some issues to consider regarding the reported levels of poverty. In 2022, the recovery begins after the health and economic crisis derived from the COVID–19 pandemic, which is reflected in the reduction in pover-

ty compared to 2020. However, the latest data published by Coneval in 2022 do not incorporate the Model Continuity Statistics (MEC) for 2022 collected by INEGI through ENIGH. For this reason, the University Program of Development Studies (PUED–UNAM) carried out the calculation based on the method designed by INEGI.⁵ According to PUED's analysis, these figures reflect a false triumphalism.

Graph 1 shows Coneval's poverty figures for 2018, which report 41.9% of people living in poverty, while in 2022 the organization reports a decrease to 36.6%. However, when contrasted with the measurements of the University Program for Development Studies (PUED) that incorporate the Statistical Continuity Model (MEC), the figures show that the decrease in poverty was not so profound. The figure estimated by the PUED in 2022 reaches 41.8%, that is, only 0.1 pp above what was reported in 2018, with an increase of 1.7 pp in extreme poverty levels compared to 2018 (Cortés, Nájera and Valdés, 2023), which shows a

GRAPH 1. PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY
2018 AND 2022



Source: In-house elaboration with data from Coneval (s.f.1) and data from 2022 MEC analyzed by PUED (s.f.)*

* Data from 2022 was estimated by PUED using MEC with preliminary results.

⁵ In 2016, INEGI made a series of modifications to the ENIGH field operations that broke the comparability of information with respect to previous poverty measurements. In order to recover comparability, the Statistical Continuity Model (MEC) was designed that corrects the ENIGH labor income based on data from the National Occupation and Employment Survey (ENOE).

substantial discrepancy with respect to the reduction in poverty in Coneval.

The “benefits from government programs” component is usually one of the resources that explains the reduction in poverty in 2022 and is collected by the ENIGH in the “transfers” category. One of the most notable elements within transfers to households is that in the midst of the economic crisis, the benefit component of government programs grew 56.3% in

2020 compared to 2018 and this increase continued in 2022 and reached 40%. Despite its growth, the results of social programs in 2022 suggest that poverty would have been 2.1 pp higher in 2022 and 1.2 pp in 2018. The above means that the impact on poverty reduction in 2022 was only 0.9 pp higher than that achieved in 2018 (Cortés, Nájera and Valdés, 2023).

Table 2 shows a comparison of the efforts between 2008 vs 2018 (prior to the current administration)

TABLE 2. VARIATIONS OF POVERTY COMPONENTS 2008 VS 2018 AND 2018 VS 2022
(PERCENTAGE POINTS)

POVERTY COMPONENTS IN MEXICO 2008–2022	2008 VS 2018	2018 VS 2022	2018 VS 2022 (PUED)
Lack of access to health services	-22.2	22.9	22.9
Lack of access to social security	-11.5	-3.3	4.8
Housing quality and space deficiency	-6.7	-1.9	-2.0
Population with educational backwardness	-2.9	0.4	-3.2
Lack of access to basic housing services	-3.3	-1.8	-1.8
Lack of access to food	0.5	-4	-6.0
Population with lower income LB	-0.2	-5.3	0.9
Population with income below the LBM	-2.8	-1.9	2.1
Poverty	-2.5	-5.6	-0.1
Moderate poverty	1.6	-5.6	-1.8
Extreme poverty	-4	0.1	1.7

Source: In-house elaboration with data from Coneval (n.d.1).



Image: Shutterstock/Angelbandala "Coneval confirms poverty increased in Mexico between 2018 and 2020" at <https://www.independientespanol.com/noticias/america-latina/Coneval-pobreza-mexico-aumento-covid-pandemia-b1898520.html>

and 2018 vs 2022 (period in which the balance of this government is reflected). It is observed that, within the poverty components, the deficiencies that show reductions under the current administration are: the lack of quality and space in housing (reduction of about -2 pp under the measurements of both Coneval and PUED), reduction in deprivation due to access to basic housing services (-1.8 pp) and reduction in deprivation due to access to food (-4 and -6 pp), which reduces poverty levels (multidimensional) by -5.6 pp (Coneval estimates) and -0.1 (PUED estimates) (Coneval, s.f.1 and PUED, s.f.).

Poverty levels have been similar in recent years. When comparing previous efforts (2008 vs. 2018) with current efforts (2018 vs. 2022), there are elements to consider:

1. There is a “false triumphalism” regarding poverty levels. On the one hand, Coneval reports a significant decrease of 5.6 percentage points in 2022 compared to 2018 (at the beginning of the six-year term). However, by incorporating the Statistical Continuity Model (MEC), the reduction was only 0.1 percentage points (Cortés, Nájera and Valdés, 2023).
2. The decrease of -5.6 percentage points in poverty levels reported by Coneval is due to the decrease in moderate poverty (reduction of 5.6 pp), not due to an effort to reduce extreme poverty.
3. Extreme poverty had a reduction of 4 percentage points from 2008 to 2018, while during this government (2018 vs 2022) not only was it not reduced, but it increased by 0.1 pp according to Coneval estimates (about 400,000 more people in extreme poverty) and by 1.7 pp according to PUED estimates (s.f.).
4. There is a large increase in at least 2 social deprivations: the lack of access to health services (+22

pp) and the lack of access to social security (+4.8 pp) so far in the current administration (2018–2022 CAN). That is an increase of 30.3 million and close to 4 million people, respectively, compared to what was registered at the beginning of the government in 2018.

5. The most significant increases in the lack of access to health services have occurred in the 30% of the population with the lowest income (deciles I, II, and III), with an increase of almost double the national average in the first two deciles (20% of the poorest population) and 50% more for people in the third poorest decile of the population (Coneval, 2021).

This evidence translates into a more significant number of people whose social rights are constantly being violated.

The results suggest that the progress achieved in a decade (2008–2018) was possibly affected, among other factors, by the arrival of the COVID–19 pandemic, its management, and the management of social policy. While moderate poverty reduction is positive, contrary to the official discourse, people's conditions under extreme poverty (the poorest of the poor) have persisted and even worsened.



Image: "Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Veracruz and Puebla, with the greatest social backwardness: Coneval" at <https://www.cursorenlanoticia.com.mx/chiapas-oaxaca-guerrero-veracruz-y-puebla-con-el-mayor-rezago-social-Coneval/>

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Coneval, 2023

Structural Changes and Social Mobility

The change in people's socioeconomic status is called social mobility. Such changes may imply improvements or setbacks in income levels, education, occupation, wealth, and health, among other economic and social dimensions (CEEY, n.d.1). The greater the social mobility, the greater the equality of opportunities⁶. Modern democracies in virtually all parts of the world aspire to high social mobility. They aim for changes where institutions enable people to achieve socioeconomic fulfillment. However, it has been documented that present inequality can negatively affect future social mobility (Corak, 2013). In the case of Mexico, low social mobility impedes the population's well-being, hindering opportunities in the different stages of the life cycle, which determines the conditions in the future.

In order to observe the impact of structural change over time, it is necessary to analyze the process of social mobility. According to the Centro de Estudios

⁶ There are different types (vertical, horizontal, intergenerational, intragenerational, upward and downward mobility) and dimensions (wealth, education, health, and work) of social mobility, with the objective of reflecting the level of equality of opportunities among the population (CEEY, n.d.1).

Espinosa Yglesias (CEEY for its acronym in Spanish), the first patterns of social mobility in Mexico have been analyzed since the 1970s (Balán *et al.*, 1977; Muñoz *et al.*, 1977; Muñoz *et al.*, 1977⁷). Subsequently, the studies focused on two dimensions: educational mobility and class occupational mobility. The findings reflect that the main determinants of educational attainment are the father's education and occupation and the mother's education; therefore, education represented the most critical factor in the occupational status of the first job, while the origin of the individual influenced indirectly through its effect on the education of the mother.

The fact that opportunities for access to a higher income stratum decrease, particularly among men from lower strata, indicates a greater rigidity of the social stratification regime since 1988 (Cortés, Escobar, and Solís 2007). Concerning intergenerational mobility⁸, there is evidence that Mexico has the sixth lowest mobility between generations of education among at least 19 Latin American compared-countries (Behr-

⁷ Studies were conducted for Monterrey (Balán, Browning, and Jelin, 1973) and Mexico City (Muñoz, De Oliveira, and Stern, 1977).

⁸ It measures how social mobility changes between two or more generations (characteristics of the current household vs. characteristics of the household of origin) (CEEY, n.d.1).

man *et al.*, 2001). In 2010, parental wealth was found to influence the level of consumption, wealth, education attained, and the home's value for children (Torche & Spilerman, 2010).

In addition to education, another dimension of social mobility refers to occupational mobility, which indicates the economic fulfillment of individuals (CEEY, n.d.1). In this sense, the labor income of individuals is the primary determinant of the total income of Mexican families, representing up to 65.7% of the total family income of Mexicans (INEGI, 2023a). Between 2007 and 2017, there was a drop in labor income, which deepened the gender gap (Campos, 2021). In addition, there is a good portion of workers who, under official definitions, are in poverty. By 2023, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2023), the indicator in which Mexico has the worst performance is the labor participation rate: while 76% of men participate in the labor force, only 44% of women do so. Regarding average income and wage equality, Mexico ranks 112th and 117th out of 146 countries, perpetuating gender inequalities.

In Mexico, the ability of individuals to improve their economic, social, educational, and health conditions is determined mainly by the place of birth and not so

MEXICO, THE WORST PERFORMANCE IN LABOR PARTICIPATION:	
76% MEN	44% WOMEN
POSITION OF MEXICO AMONG 146 COUNTRIES:	
PLACE 112 IN AVERAGE INCOME	PLACE 117 IN WAGE EQUALITY

much by the conditions that the individual manages to develop (Castañeda, n.d). There is evidence that being born in some areas of the country generates greater possibilities for social mobility than others. Being born and living under conditions of poverty or extreme poverty influences the social mobility of individuals, that is, the changes experienced in socio-economic status, and in Mexico, the lack of mobility is much more significant in the southern region. At the same time, in the north, there is greater fluidity (Orozco *et al.*, 2019).

Table 3 defines the ten barriers to social mobility that CEEY (n.d.1) identified based on the Esru Social Mobility Survey (Esru-EMOVI, for its acronym in Spanish). These refer to personal characteristics, the family environment, as well as the characteristics of markets and public services:

TABLE 3. THE 10 BARRIERS TO SOCIAL MOBILITY IN MEXICO

BARRIERS	DESCRIPTION
BEING A WOMAN	Si una mujer nació en condiciones de pobreza tendrá menos probabilidades que un hombre de escapar de la pobreza. Y si proviene de un estatus elevado, tendrá menos probabilidades de mantenerlo.
BEING DARK-SKINNED	Una persona con un tono de piel más oscuro experimenta menor movilidad ascendente y mayor movilidad descendente respecto de quienes reportan un tono de piel más claro.
BEING BORN AND RAISED IN THE COUNTRY'S SOUTH	Un mexicano que nace en un hogar pobre en la región sur, tiene 3 veces menos posibilidades de salir de la pobreza que quien nace en el norte, en la misma situación.
BEING RAISED IN A LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLD	La riqueza de los hogares de origen, aporta casi la mitad del peso de la desigualdad de oportunidades en la desigualdad económica.
HAVING PARENTS WITH LOW EDUCATION LEVELS	Las características del hogar de origen condicionan el logro educativo de los hijos, en especial para niveles de educación media superior y superior.
HAVING A PARENT WHO HAS WORKED IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR	La probabilidad de que un joven tenga un primer empleo formal (con seguridad social) se reduce en -40% si su padre fue trabajador en el sector informal.
HAVING WORKED DURING CHILDHOOD	El trabajo temprano inhibe la movilidad ascendente. Las personas que decidieron trabajar y no continuar con sus estudios reportan un retroceso en la escala ocupacional y de ingresos respecto a sus padres.
TO HAVE EVENING PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EDUCATION	Quienes asisten a escuelas públicas y/o con horario vespertino, tienen menores posibilidades de acceder a la educación superior que quienes asisten a escuelas privadas y/o matutinas.
HAVING A FIRST JOB IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR.	Para las personas que provienen de un hogar pobre, la probabilidad de tener un trabajo formal (con seguridad social) se reduce en -37.1% si su primer empleo fue informal.
NOT HAVING ACCESS TO CHILDCARE SERVICES.	Contar con centros de cuidado infantil en la localidad amplía las opciones de movilidad social ascendente entre las mujeres que provienen de hogares en pobreza.

Note: Upward mobility refers to the probability of moving into a higher category (educational, occupational, and wealth) than the household of origin. In contrast, downward mobility refers to positioning oneself in a lower category than that of the household of origin (CEEY, n.d.1).

Source: In-house elaboration with data from CEEY (n.d.1).



Image: "Informal labour: the incorrect enemy of the Mexican economy" at <https://elpais.com/mexico/opinion/2022-12-28/informales-el-enemigo-incorrecto-de-la-economia-mexicana.html>

It is necessary to emphasize that low social mobility is due to the fragmentation of social security, educational lags, informality, and low quality of employment, among other elements (Delajara *et al.*, 2018), which, although they already affect opportunities for access to strata with better living conditions, these have likely been hindered in the face of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inequality can be understood more broadly as the result of unequal access to job opportunities, health, longer life expectancy, assets, and social mobility. This situation promotes constant mechanisms of exclusion, which persist and promote poverty and underdevelopment in Mexico.

◀ Inequality and perpetuity of development

It is not enough to grow and generate more income since the persistence of poverty is linked to the behavior of inequality (Casas, 2019), and this is not limited to the purchasing power of people but also has an impact on access to essential services such as health care, education, water and sanitation, i.e., elements that can restrict human rights due to discrimination, abuse, and lack of justice. These inequalities are part of the pending problems in the international agenda, and evidently in Mexico; so much so that goal 10, "Reduction of inequalities," is an integral part of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals included in the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations (UN, n.d.2).

As noted above, inequality is manifested in living conditions, income levels, gender differences, ethnic-racial and territorial conditions, those related to opportunities and the stages of people's life cycle, which determine income levels, access to resources such as education, health, decent work, social protection and spaces for participation, among others (Rivas & Gaudin, 2021). These inequalities accumulate and perpetuate circles of poverty, vulnerability, and inequities whose attention requires the concert-

ed action of the State and society as a whole (Signos Vitales, 2021a).

The constant mechanisms of social exclusion have transformed the structure of the economy, which has significantly influenced the pattern of income distribution (Fajnzylber, 1989). The panorama we face indicates that the gap between rich and poor people increases year by year, which causes differences in access to opportunities and aggravates existing ones. This gap damages economies and prevents the elimination of global poverty (Oxfam, n.d.1). Mexico, for its part, is located in the most economically unequal region in the world. In fact, when ranking the Gini index from the highest to the lowest level of inequality, Mexico ranked fifth out of 77 countries in 2020, with a Gini coefficient of⁹ 45.4 when the average was 34.8. In other words, 92% of the countries in this sample have lower income inequality (World Income Inequality Database, n.d.) (Graph 2).

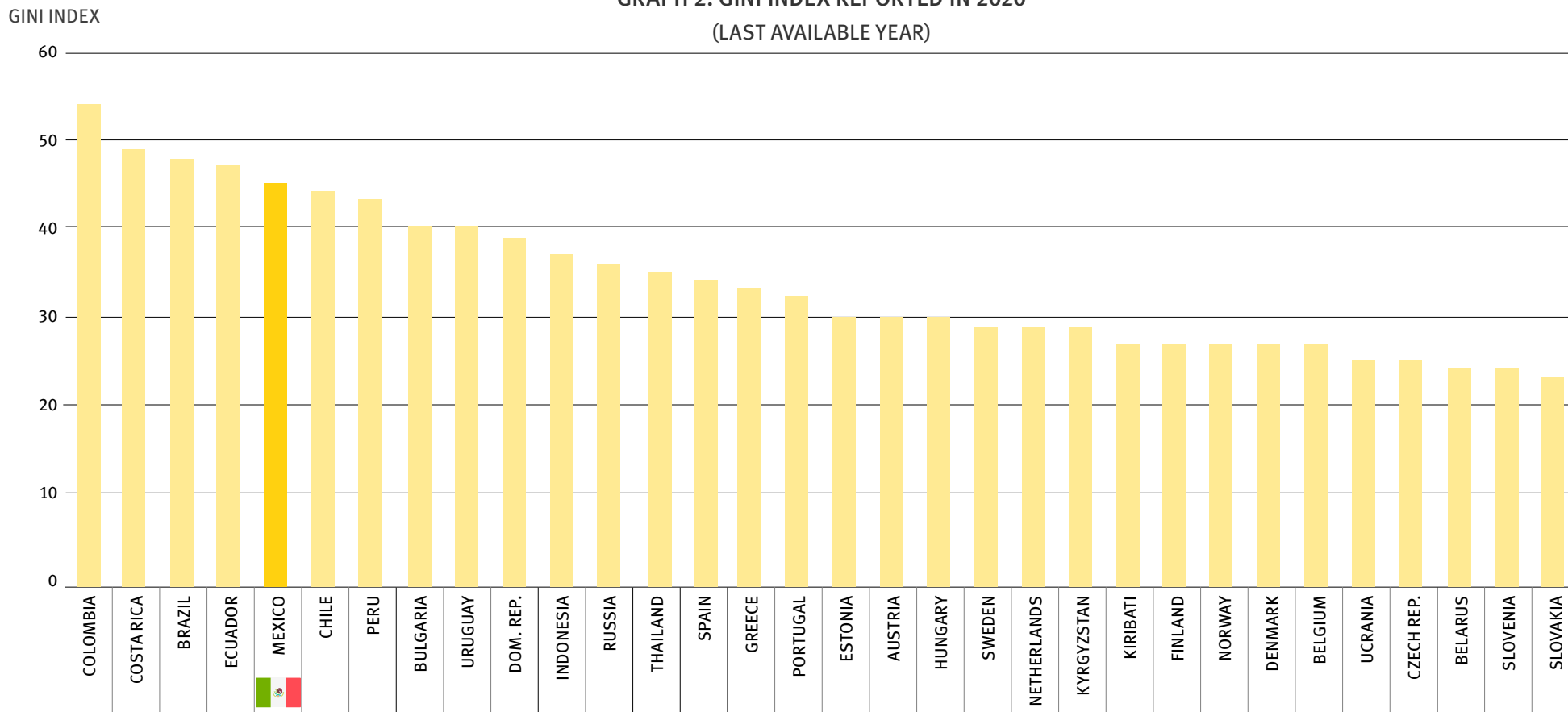
9 The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditure) among individuals in an economy departs from a perfectly equal distribution. A Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 represents perfect inequality. <https://databank.bancomundial.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SI.POV.GINI&country=#>

Although there have been efforts to reduce inequality significantly, income distribution is high and persistent. Active participation of the state is decisive on all fronts, as well as for providing welfare, human development, and protection against risk (ECLAC, 2010).

Unlike Asian, European, or North American economies, available data suggest that Mexico did not experience a substantial reduction in inequality during the 20th century (Chancel *et al.*, 2022). An international comparison based on an economic well-being index indicates that wealth persistence is greater in Mexico than in other countries. While in countries such as the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Norway, three out of every ten people (38%, 37%, and 35% respectively) with origins in the 20% of highest income remain in that quintile, in Mexico it is six out of every ten people (60%). This persistence of wealth is lower even in countries of similar development, such as Chile, where four out of ten people (46%) were born and remained in the highest income quintile (Esru Foundation, 2008).

On the other hand, concerning the persistence of poverty, the proportion of people with origins in the lowest quintile who moved up to the highest quintile was only 4% in Mexico. In comparison, in the Nordic

GRAPH 2. GINI INDEX REPORTED IN 2020
(LAST AVAILABLE YEAR)



Source: In-house elaboration with data from World Income Inequality Database (n.d.).

countries, it was around 12%; in the United States, 8%, and in Chile, 5% (Esru Foundation, 2008). Therefore, it can be inferred that socioeconomic mobility for the extremes on the economic well-being scale is lower in Mexico than in the countries compared.

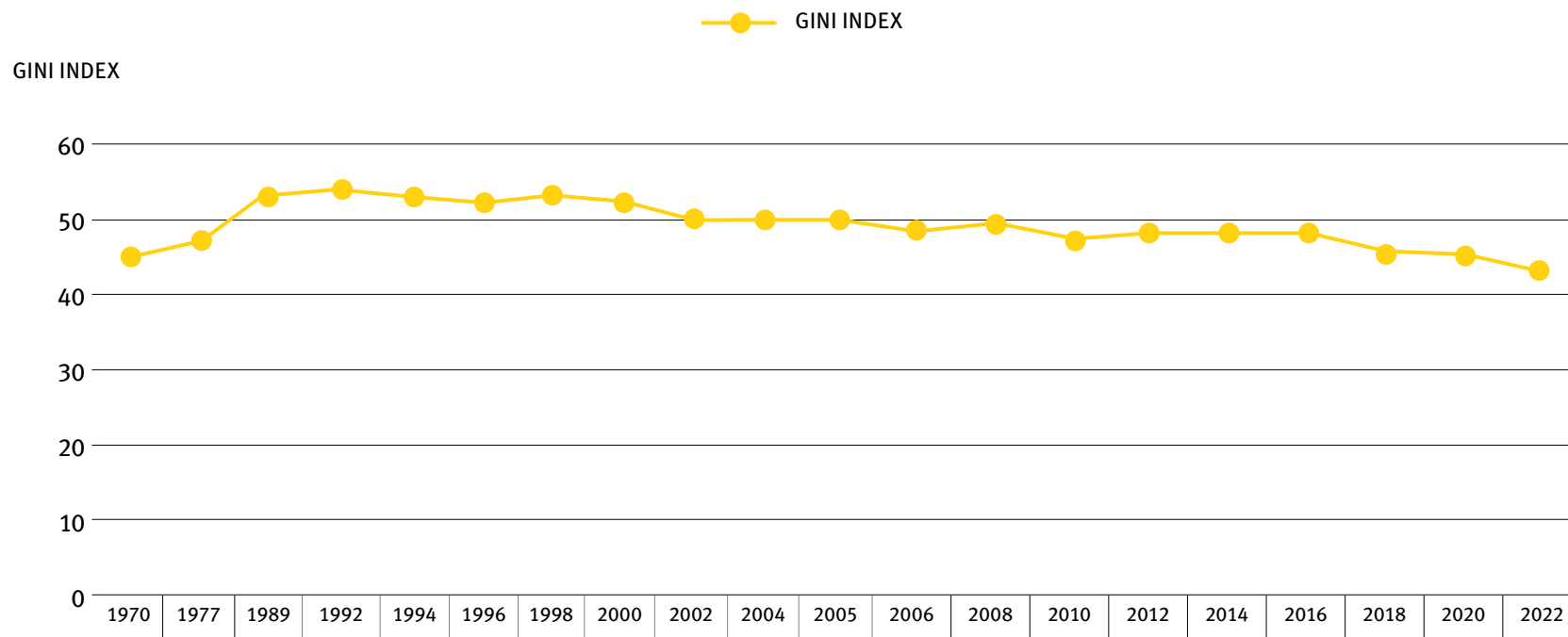
Graph 3 shows the evolution of income inequality in the country, with data since 1970, where it is illustrated that it has been extreme in past years, reaching its highest point during the 1990s. A downward trend began without significantly reducing the coefficient

starting in 2000, illustrating the persistence of inequality in recent years, compared to figures similar to those reported in 1970.

In 2021, the wealthiest 10% of the population concentrated 79% of total household wealth; this contrasts with the fact that the poorest half of the population is deprived of its wealth and even negative, mean-

ing that this group has, on average, more debts than assets (Chancel *et al.*, 2022). In 2022, the Gini index stood at 42.1, a reduction of 2.6 points compared to 2018 (Coneval, n.d.2). The above signifies an improvement in income distribution; however, it persists, and points to the fact that the role of transfers drives such reduction has a background that we will see below.

GRAPH 3. EVOLUTION OF THE GINI INDEX IN MEXICO 1970–2022



Source: In-house elaboration with data from the World Income Inequality Database (n.d.) from 1970 to 2014 and Coneval (n.d.2) from 2016 to 2022.

At the same time, there are obvious inequalities and gaps within Mexico, even when the same territory is involved. As pointed out in the Signos Vitales reports on the north and south of Mexico (Signos Vitales 2022b, 2022c), income and employment conditions, including poverty rates in both regions, are very different and give a peculiar dynamic to the levels of development in each zone. For example, for the poor population (located in Quintiles I and II) in the country's north, 62% of people born below the poverty line remain poor for the rest of their lives. In contrast, in the country's south, it increases to 85% who are born poor and remain in such position for the rest of their lives (CEEY, 2017 and Vital Signs, 2022c). Development, poverty, and inequality are different concepts that are intrinsically related and have a notable impact on people's well-being. Given an income level, the greater the inequality, the greater the poverty; moreover, greater inequality means a slower rate of poverty reduction in Mexico (Conconi & Viollaz, n.d.).

The importance of the persistence and reproduction of social inequalities between generations lies in the fact that they are closely linked to cumulative processes of disadvantages and deprivations throughout the life cycle (ECLAC, 2016), which determines a

person's life course. Even though several different public policies have been generated in Mexico to combat and contain inequality, the effects of inequality continue to obstruct economic and social mobility and human development and, additionally, inhibit economic growth. This situation has generated uncertainty and vulnerability in the country, eroding trust in government and institutions and increasing discord and social tensions, which can trigger conflictive and violent acts (UN, n.d.2).



Image: "In Africa there is poverty, in Mexico misery" at https://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-africa-pobreza-mexico-miseria-202101032318_noticia.html

Human Development

Inequalities permeate development, reproducing and widening gaps that generate poverty traps when related to persistent structural factors. This situation prevents Mexico's most affected areas or regions from achieving opportunities equal to those offered by geographical spaces with better conditions (Vreyer, Herrera, and Mesplé-Somps, 2009). According to the UN (n.d.3), several factors reinforce the perpetuity of poverty, for example, unequal access to health care, lack of justice or nutritious food, and the fact of living in insecure places without access to health care.

The United Nations Development Program (PNUD, its acronym in Spanish), through the Human Development Index (IDH for its acronym in Spanish), measures economic (Gross National Income), educational (average years of schooling), and health (life expectancy) advances that affect human development around the world. In general, there is a generalized upward trend in the IDH in all Latin American and Caribbean countries, which shows an improvement in the average well-being of the populations in the region.

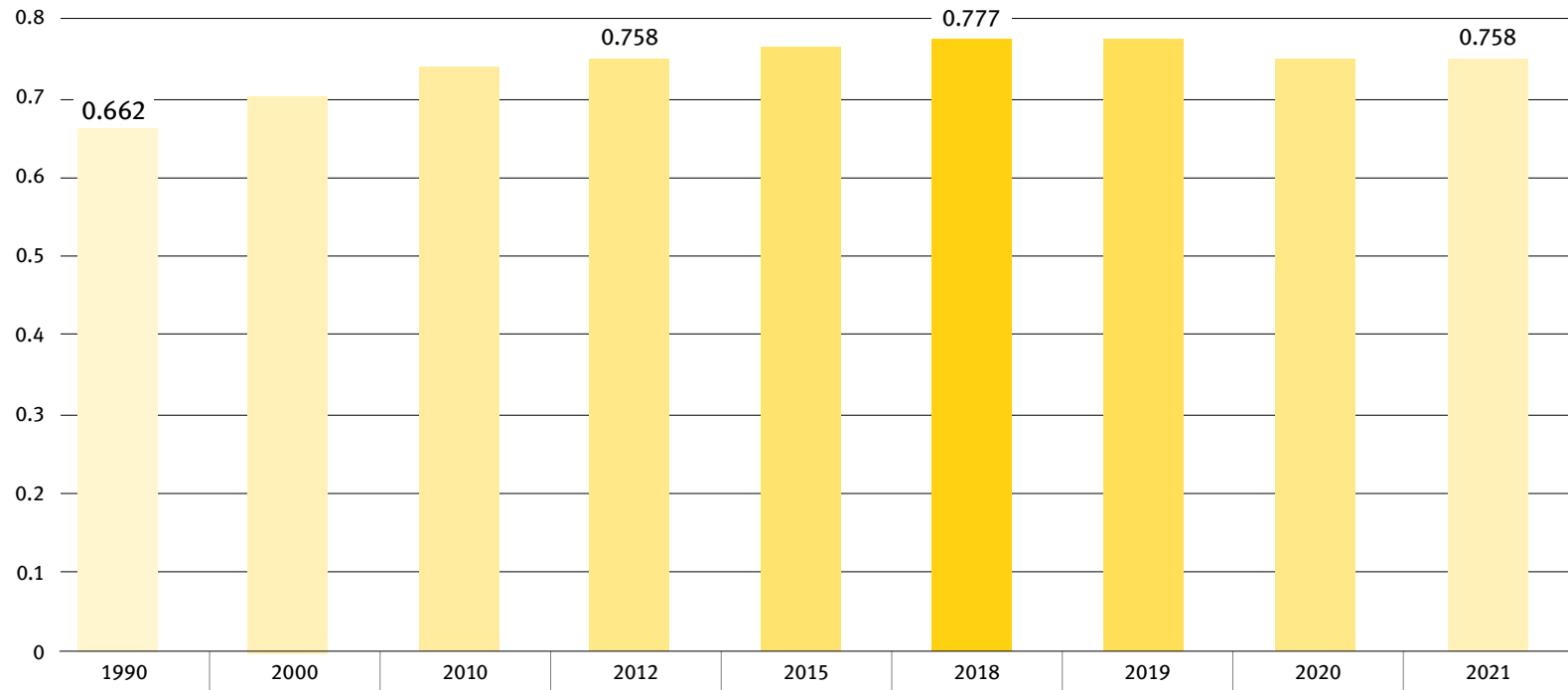
In the 32 years that the PNUD has been elaborating the IDH, it has worsened globally for two consecutive

years, among other causes, due to the health crisis. In the specific case of Mexico, in 29 years, the IDH rose 0.115 points to reach 0.777 in 2018, but such improvement stagnated and even regressed in 2019 and 2020. By 2021, it decreased even more, reaching 2012 levels (PNUD, 2022) (Graph 4), further indicating the inability to address social problems and reversing part of the progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The setback is practically worldwide, as more than 90% of the countries recorded a deterioration in their IDH levels, demonstrating that the crisis has worsened the level of development for many. So far, during the current administration, two specific components of Human Development have decreased, one related to life expectancy and the other to gross national income (INB, for its acronym in Spanish). The expected years of schooling (14.9 years for both 2020 and 2021) and the average number of years of schooling (9.2 for both years) remained unchanged (Graph 5).

Mexico presents a negative value of -16 points in the difference between GDP per capita and IDH in 2021 concerning 2020 (PNUD, 2022), which means that we are better classified by GDP than by IDH. In other words, economic growth associated with GDP perfor-

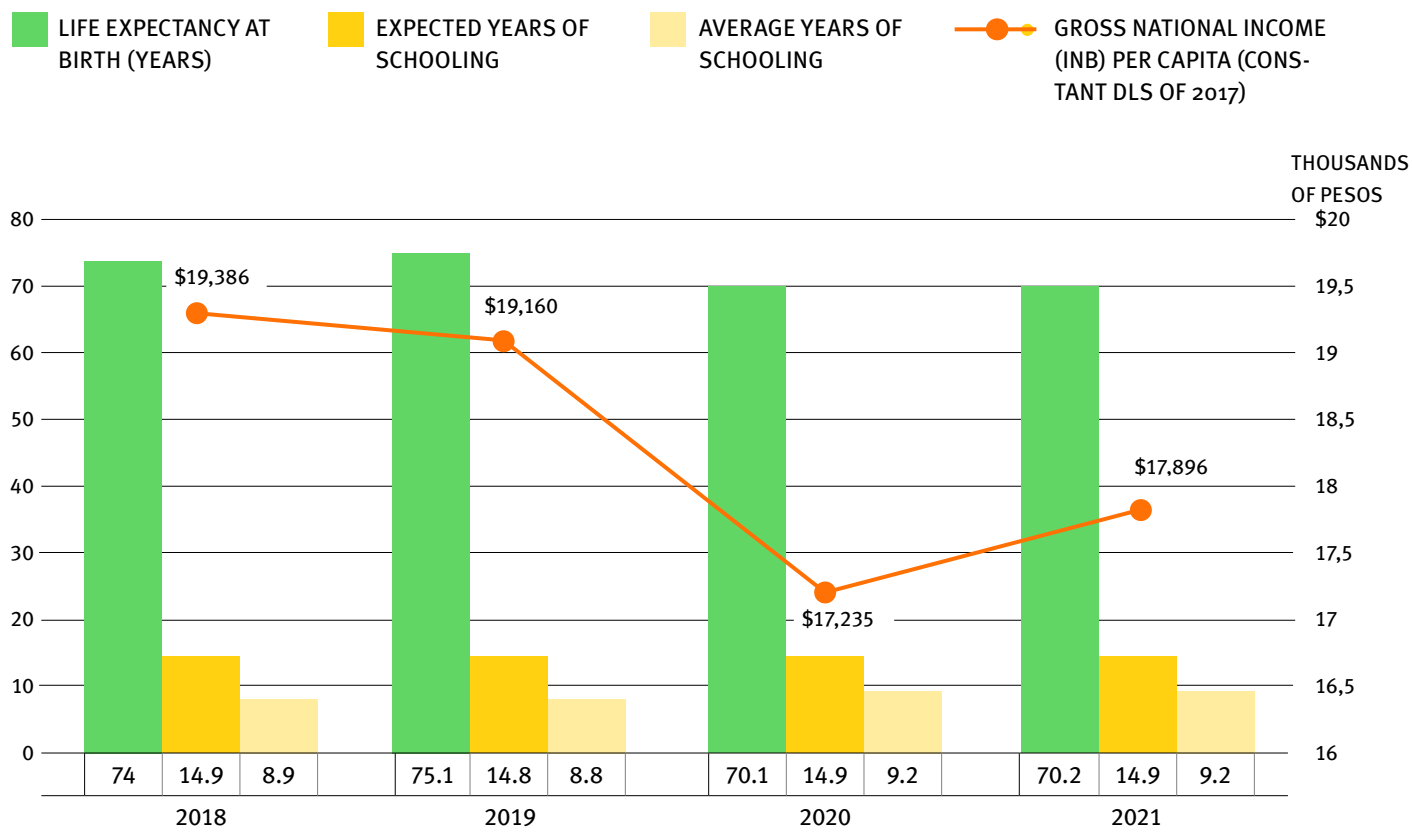
GRAPH 4. EVOLUTION OF THE MEXICAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX



Source: In-house elaboration with data from PNUD (2022).

In 29 years, the IDH rose 0.115 points to reach 0.777 in 2018, but such improvement stagnated and even regressed in 2019 and 2020. By 2021, it decreased even more, reaching 2012 levels (PNUD, 2022), further indicating the inability to address social problems and reversing part of the progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

GRAPH 5. EVOLUTION OF THE MEXICAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX
2018–2021



Source: In-house elaboration with data from PNUD (2022).

mance and living standard development associated with IDH shows a significant gap. It is necessary to pay more attention to the factors that determine the quality-of-life outside GDP, which would allow prog-

ress in Social Welfare. This data contrasts sharply with the policies proposed at the beginning of the current administration.

Social Gap

Considering the above scenario, the State should play a more active role in reducing inequality with policies focused on a rights-based approach (Bárceña, 2012). However, in our country, the Social Gap Index (IRS, for its acronym in Spanish) clearly shows which components are not being addressed. The IRS indicates the degree of access to some social rights of individuals and their household assets (Coneval, n.d.3). It also makes it possible to follow up on four dimensions indicated in the General Law for Social Development (LGDS, for its acronym in Spanish): a) the level of educational backwardness, b) access to health services, c) quality and space of housing and essential housing services, and d) indicators of household assets (Coneval, n.d.3).

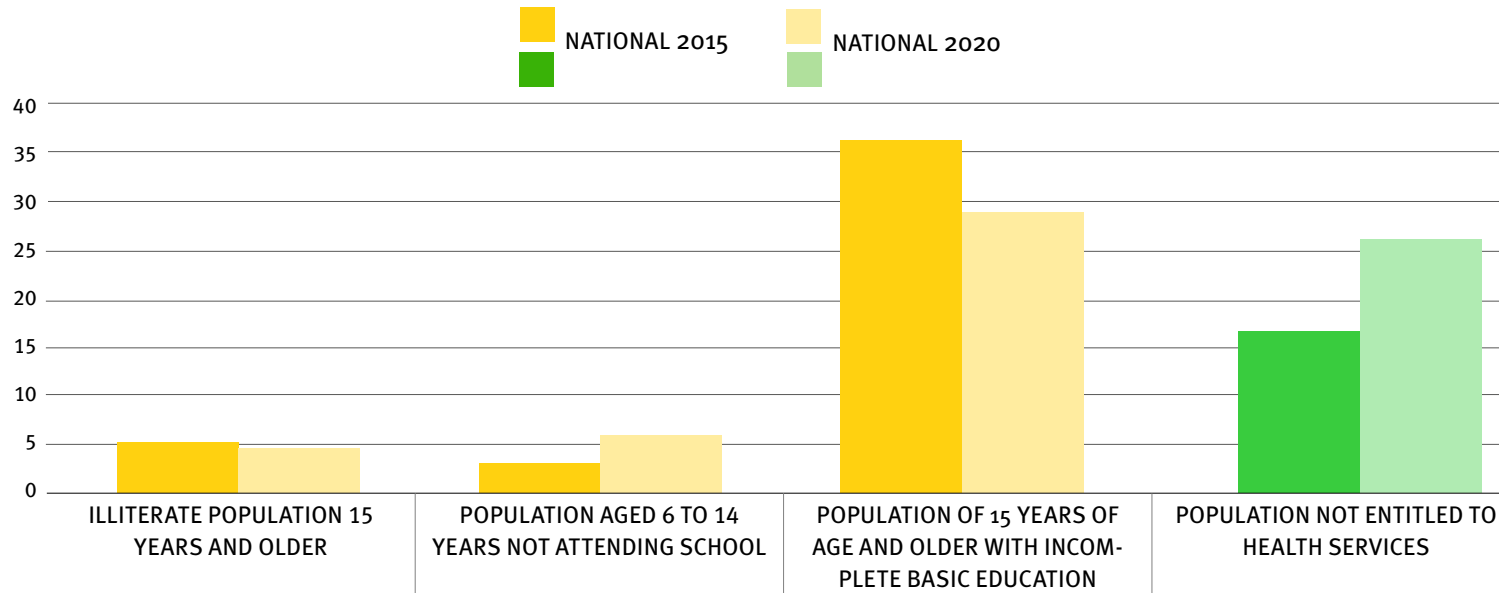
From 2015 to 2020 in Mexico, some components of the IRS decreased, such as the illiterate population and the population with incomplete basic education. However, the percentages of those not attending school and those without access to health services have increased (Graph 6). On the other hand, the percentages of homes with some component of social backwardness have decreased (Graph 7). This infor-

mation is indicated by Coneval data (n.d.3) in 2020 compared to its previous measurement in 2015.

Regarding the results by state, two effects can be observed: on the one hand, social backwardness deepened from 2015 to 2020 for almost all states, and, on the other hand, there is persistence in the degrees of social backwardness. In other words, the states with the highest and lowest levels of social backwardness remain the same (Graph 8). In this sense, the five entities with the highest IRS were Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Veracruz, and Puebla. The first four have a very high level of social backwardness, and Puebla has a high level. On the other hand, the five entities with the lowest IRS were Nuevo León, Coahuila, Mexico City, Aguascalientes, and Colima, of which only Colima has a low degree of social backwardness since the remaining four entities have a very low degree of social backwardness.

Development is a broad and complex process. The analysis of the components of social backwardness gives us a human rights vision that allows us to infer that there is still much to be done, especially in specific priority areas that continue to correspond (at least state-wise) with the entities with the highest levels of poverty and extreme poverty in the country. This

**GRAPH 6. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WITH SOME COMPONENT OF SOCIAL BACKWARDNESS
IN 2015 AND 2020 NATIONALLY**

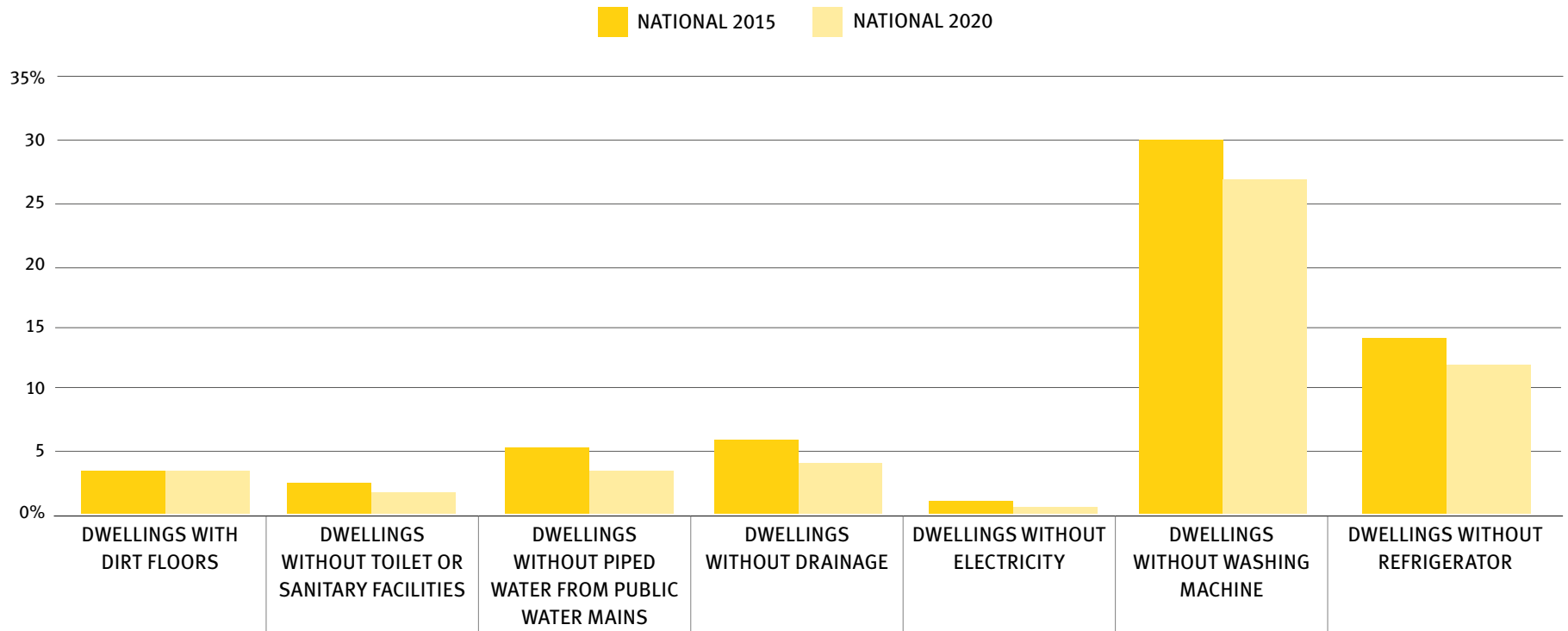


Source: In-house elaboration with data from Coneval (n.d.3).



Images: <https://www.elsoldemexico.com.mx/mexico/sociedad/hay-4.4-millones-de-personas-analfabetas-7289159.html>; www.eleconomista.com.mx/estados/Impulsa-Mexico-modelo-para-reducir-trabajo-infantil-20180611-0089.html; politica.expansion.mx/mexico/2021/02/21/voces-david-y-otros-2-5-millones-menores-de-edad-dejaran-escuela-y-empezaran-a-laborar; www.infobae.com/america/mexico/2022/08/31/malinterpretamos-a-la-bestia-javier-lozano-tundio-amlo-por-rectificar-postura-sobre-consultorios-farmaceuticos/

GRAPH 7. PERCENTAGE OF DWELLINGS WITH SOME COMPONENT OF SOCIAL BACKWARDNESS
2015 AND 2020 NATIONALLY

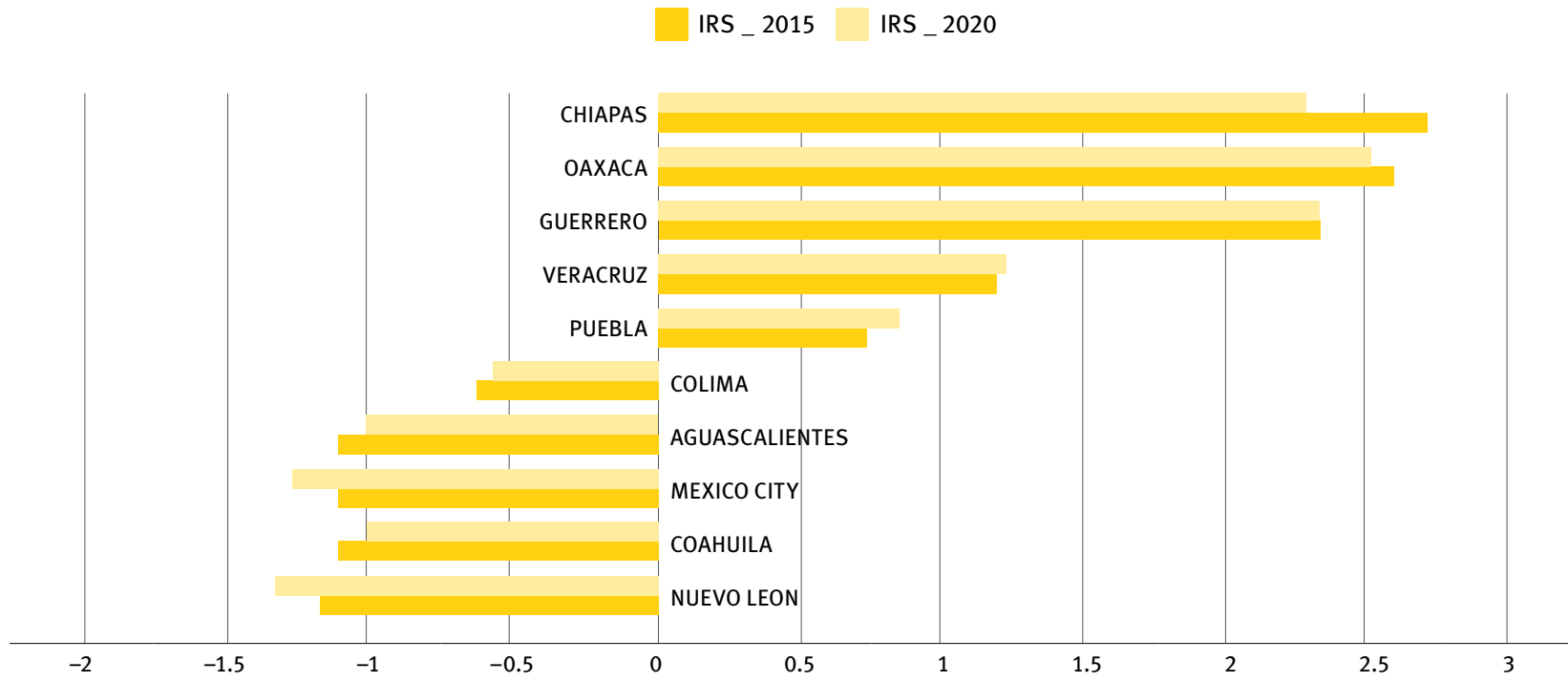


Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de Coneval (s.f.3).

information suggests that there are no substantial changes in poverty levels and that the same social map continues to be reproduced with all its effects. In other words, the same public policies continue to be implemented, with significant deficiencies that have not yielded results for years in the country.

The analysis of the components of social backwardness allows us to infer that there is still much to be done in the entities with the highest levels of poverty and extreme poverty.

GRAPH 8. COMPARISON OF THE TEN ENTITIES WITH THE HIGHEST AND LOWEST SOCIAL GAP
2015 AND 2020



Source: In-house elaboration with data from Coneval (n.d.3).



Image: <https://www.economista.es/economia-eAm-mexico/noticias/10383955/02/20/En-Mexico-salir-de-la-pobreza-depende-del-lugar-de-nacimiento-CEEY-y-Colmex.html>

Strategies to fight poverty

One way to understand and improve social performance in Mexico regarding poverty, inequality, and well-being is through social policy evaluation. In general, it is a fundamental tool to know the actions that are effective or not in order to solve the great social problems that afflict the country (Coneval, s.f.4), which we analyze intending to observe the changes in poverty, given the changes in Mexico's social policy.

The fight against poverty, understood as a set of government interventions and social policies, has played an important role in the federal strategies implemented since the 1970s in Mexico (Ordoñez, 2018). Our country continues to be where inequality of opportunities is the norm rather than the exception in which the poorest face conditions with lower possibilities of escaping poverty. This fact should be different, given that public policies should be aimed at improving the country's conditions without regard to political, electoral, or personal benefit tendencies.

Table 4 describes the different stages of the trajectory in terms of government interventions. According to Ordoñez (2018), it is possible to distinguish different stages: In the first, located in the 1970s and early

1980s, policies were aimed at redirecting a portion of public resources to rural dwellers under poverty conditions in the framework of “rural development” policies¹⁰.” starting in 1982, the second stage redefined the social pact by implementing the first program to combat poverty. The third stage began in 1995 with specific programs to address poverty, which lasted until the alternation of power (2000 to 2012), continuing practically the same strategy inherited from the previous government, mainly targeting the rural poor population.

One of the transformations occurred from the Progresía program to Oportunidades in 2002, which implied, among other things, its expansion to urban areas (Ordóñez, 2018). The dynamics followed by the current government have not changed substantially from that implemented by its predecessors, which has resulted in the endurance of poverty levels and even in the deepening of poverty with effects on peo

¹⁰ Under this scheme, in addition to the Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares (Conasupo, for its acronym in Spanish), which had already existed since 1961, the Integral Program for Rural Development (PIDER, for its acronym in Spanish), the IMSS rural health care system in 1973, the General Coordination of the National Plan for Depressed Areas and Marginalized Groups (Coplamar, for its acronym in Spanish) and the Mexican Food System (SAM, for its acronym in Spanish) were created.

TABLE 4. CHANGES AND IMPLEMENTATION IN SOCIAL POLICY SINCE 1970 1/2

PERIOD	PROGRAM	STAGE	IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULT
1970–1982	Rural Development Investment Program (PIDER)	At this stage, it is vital to situate the programs as part of the government's efforts to give a new meaning to the post–revolutionary statist project.	They did not constitute a specific policy to combat poverty but rather a national development policy applied to areas defined as particularly poor.
1976–1983	General Coordination of the National Plan for Depressed Areas and Marginalized Groups (Coplamar)	In the second stage, from 1982 to 1994, Pronasol was implemented and presented as the first program to combat poverty.	It served as a formula for governance and made it possible to redefine the social pact.
1983–1988	Regional Development Programs		
1988–1995	National Solidarity Program (Pronasol)		
1997–2001	Health and Nutrition Education Program (Progresa)	The third stage deals with the poverty assistance program maintained from one six–year term to the next (Zedillo to Fox), reflecting the model's continuity.	In the six–year periods between 2000 and 2012, strategic programs were implemented, such as the Rural Support Program (Procampo), the Rural Supply Program (DICONSA), the Human Development Program (Oportunidades), the Food Support Program (PAL) LICONSA and the Strategic Project for Food Security (PESA), of which Oportunidades has been the most successful.
2000–2006	Oportunidades, Procampo, Diconsa, Liconsa, Food Support Program		
2006–2012			

TTABLE 4. CHANGES AND IMPLEMENTATION IN SOCIAL POLICY SINCE 1970 2/2

2012–2018	National Crusade against Hunger	The Crusade was aimed at a subset of the population living in extreme poverty. Although significant progress was made in reducing deprivation, the challenge remained to link coordination with other strategies, especially economic ones, to reduce poverty sustainably.	Social deprivations decreased between 2013–2014 and 2015. Among them, it is vital to highlight the decreases in deprivation due to access to health services and food. The deprivation due to access to health services went from 32.9 percent between 2013 and 2014 to 9.2 in 2015. For its part, the deprivation due to access to food went from 100 to 42.5 percent in this group.
2018–2024	Wellness Programs	The programs implemented during the current government (2018–2024) cater to a greater extent to young people and older adults, neglecting early childhood. Unfortunately, the immediate effects of social policy evaluation have shown setbacks.	Poverty levels increased by 3.8 million Mexicans from 2018 to 2020. However, in 2022, a reduction of 5.6 percentage points concerning 2018 was reported in moderate poverty, which explains the decrease. There were considerable increases in the lack of access to health services regarding poverty components. In contrast, the lack of access to nutritious and quality food and educational backwardness levels remained similar from 2022 to 2018 (Coneval, n.d.1).

Source: In-house elaboration with information from Ordoñez (2018) and Coneval (n.d.1).

The fight against poverty, one of the country's greatest needs certainly, has been present in practically all of Mexico's government plans and programs, implying a political and social commitment to the Mexican population. Nevertheless, regardless of the strategy applied during the six-year terms, poverty (measured only by income level) has not been reduced but has even increased in recent years (Graph 9).

To make matters worse, the budgets allocated to such social interventions have not yielded results either. In other words, not all the budget allocated to social spending has positive redistributive effects or effects on poverty reduction (Jaramillo-Molina, 2019). Graph 10 shows that although the absolute total amount in constant pesos (green column) is placed at a historical maximum in 2022 with 1.3 trillion pesos when compared to GDP, the increase has been barely 0.7% concerning 2018, coming to represent only 4.7% of GDP in 2022.

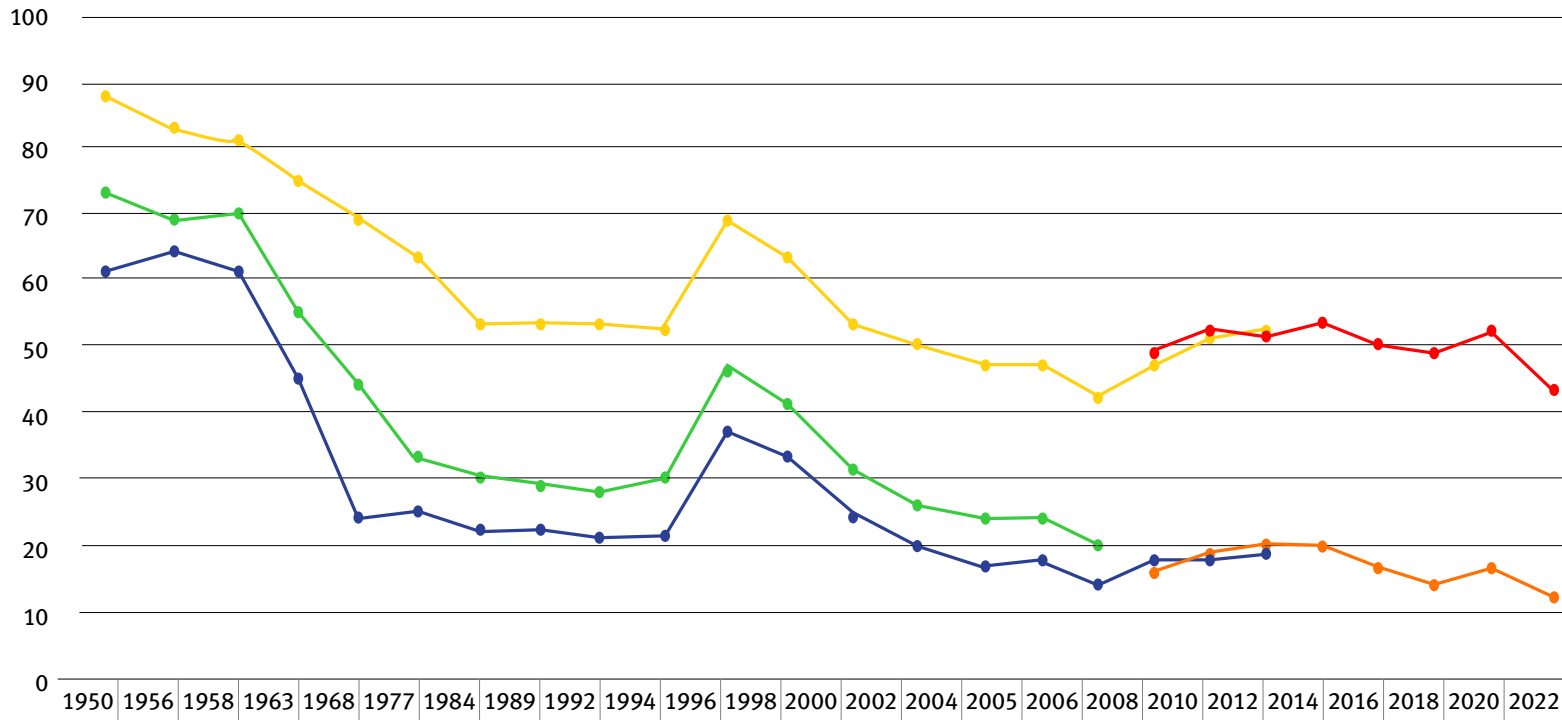
The budget of federal programs and actions has averaged 1.15 trillion pesos according to the inventory of programs of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval, n.d.5). In other words, close to 17.21 trillion pesos have been spent on federal programs and actions since 2008 and

poverty has not only not decreased, but increased (Hernández, 2022). In fact, compared to a six-year term, President López Obrador's term would be the one with the lowest budget allocated to federal social programs than that allocated by Felipe Calderón (2006–2012) in the last four years of his six-year term and that of Peña Nieto (2012–2018) in the first three years of his six-year term (Jaramillo-Molina, 2022).

Based on information from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ENIGH, for its acronym in Spanish) of 2018, 2020, and 2022 (INEGI n.d.1, n.d.2 and 2023a) where changes in social policy and its effects on households on social programs are highlighted, we find a decrease in the reach of social programs to lower-income households. The amount allocated to social programs indicates that those who really need it are not necessarily receiving it. In other words, the lower-income population (deciles I and II) saw reduced monetary transfers from social programs (–24 and –4, respectively). In comparison, there was greater support for the higher-income population (deciles VIII, VII, and V).

Graph 11 corroborates the regressivity of social programs. It shows how in 2018, people under poverty condition (Decile I) received 23% of the total of social

GRAPH 9. EVOLUTION OF THE POPULATION IN INCOME POVERTY
(%) 1950–2022*

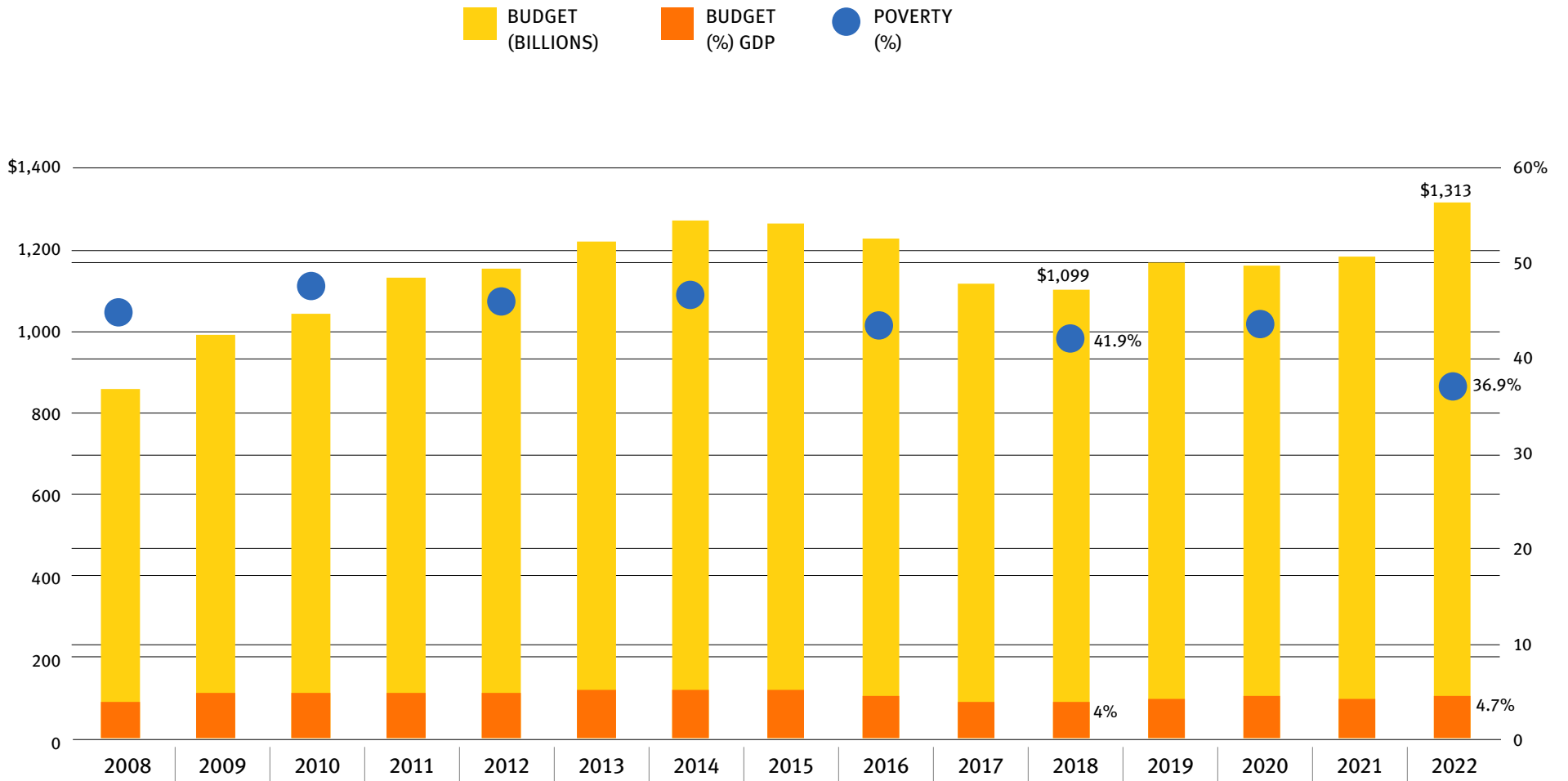


*Note: 2022 is the last data published. Source: In-house elaboration with data from Székely (2005) from 1950–2004 and Coneval (n.d.1) from 1992–2022.

programs, a percentage that was reduced by more than half to 10% in 2020 and 9% in 2022, according to the ENIGH 2022 (INEGI, 2023a). Seven out of every ten pesos increase in the budget allocated to social programs went to the 50% with the highest income.

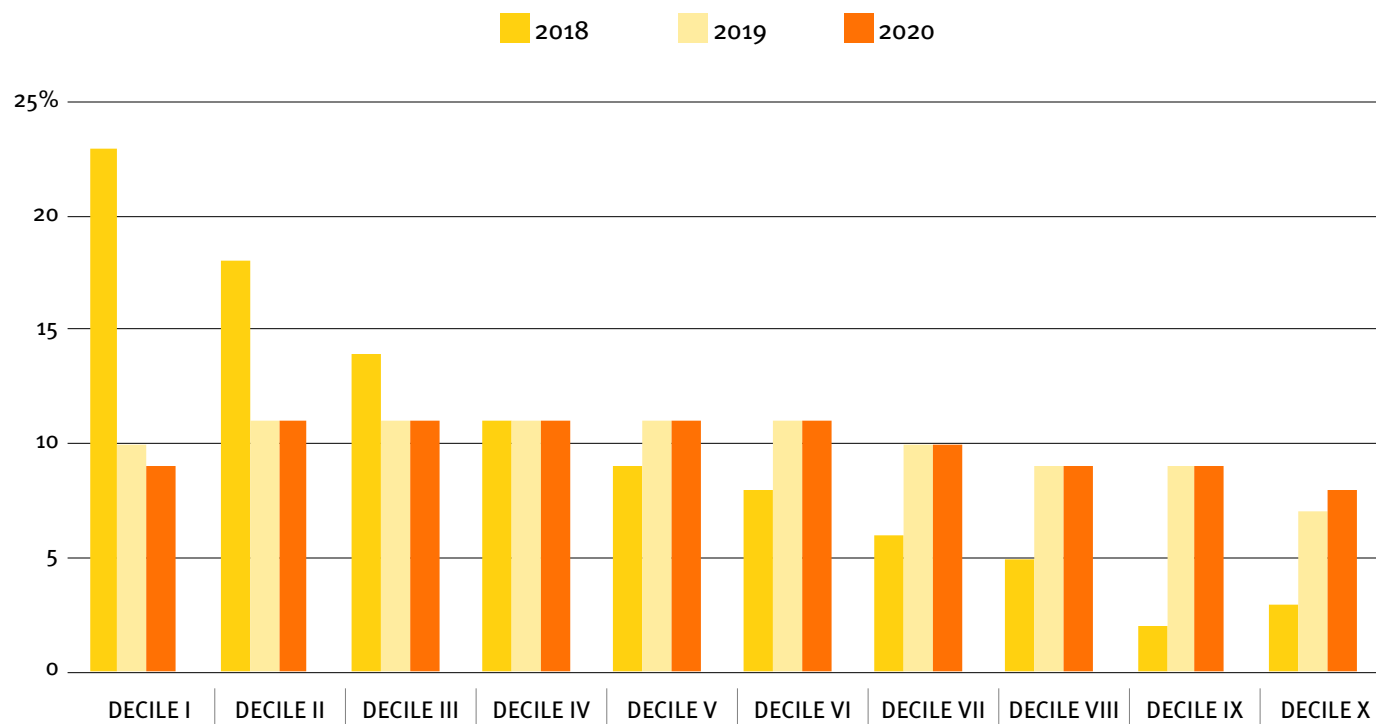
- FOOD
- CAPABILITES
- HERITAGE
- POPULATION WITH LOWER INCOME THAN THE EXTREME POVERTY LINE
- POPULATION WITH LOWER INCOME THAN THE POVERTY LINE

GRAPH 10. BUDGET OF FEDERAL SOCIAL PROGRAMS AND EVOLUTION OF POVERTY LEVELS
IN MEXICO



Source: In-house elaboration with information from Jaramillo-Molina (2022) and Coneval (n.d.1 and n.d.4).

GRAPH 11. DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL SOCIAL PROGRAMS BY INCOME
DECILES PER PERSON



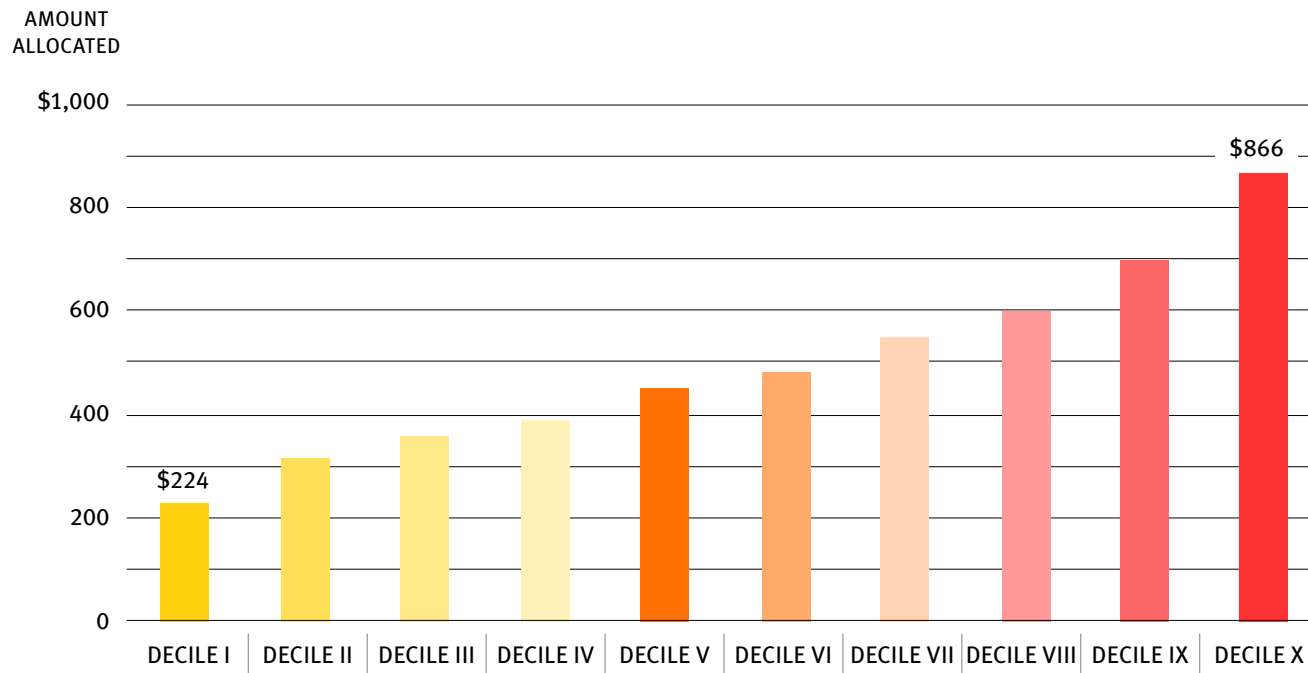
Source: Elaborated by INDESIG based on ENIGH 2022 (Jaramillo–Molina, 2023).

To make matters worse, the current government transfers almost four times as much to each person from wealthier households (Graph 12). That is, a person belonging to the 10% of the population with the highest income in the country (decile X) receives an average of 886 pesos per month. At the same time,

a person in the 10% with the lowest income (decile I) only receives an average of 224 pesos per month from social programs in 2022.

If the above were not enough, Coneval’s 2022 poverty results indicate the effects on the social well–

GRAPH 12. AVERAGE MONTHLY PER CAPITA SOCIAL PROGRAM TRANSFERS
BY PERSON IN 2022



Source: Elaborated by INDESIG based on ENIGH 2022 (Jaramillo–Molina, 2023).

being of particular population groups, derived from various internal and external factors, including the COVID–19 health emergency (Coneval, n.d.2). In particular, it is noted that some population groups face lower levels of wellbeing and systematic obstacles to the exercise of their social rights described in Ta-

ble 5, such as the case of indigenous people, people with disabilities, children and adolescents, and the elderly population.

The preceding points to growing gaps and inequalities in the exercise of the social rights of these pop-

TABLE 5. OBSTACLES OF THE POPULATION GROUPS IN SOCIAL WELFARE

POPULATION	SYSTEMIC OBSTACLE
Indigenous people	In 2022, 7 out of 10 indigenous people were living in poverty (65.2%), and the two deprivations with the highest incidence in this population were access to social security (75%) and access to essential services in housing (58%). In addition, there was a substantial increase from 2020 to 2022 in the lack of access to health services (32.8% to 56.9%, respectively).
Disabled population	In 2022, 41.2% of the population with disabilities lived in poverty; that same year, the most common deprivation in this population group was lack of access to health services (44.8%) and social security (41.1%).
Children and teenagers	Half of the children and adolescents lived in poverty in 2022 (48.1%). The most reported deprivations in this population, in addition to access to social security (59.3%), were access to health services (45.9%) and access to nutritious and quality food (20.1%).
Population 12 to 29 years old	In 2022, 37.5% of the population between 12 and 29 was impoverished. The deprivation with the highest incidence for young people was access to social security (57.9%), followed by access to health services, which increased from 32.1% to 41.9% between 2020 and 2022.
Elderly Population	In terms of the older adult population, from 2020 to 2022, a reduction in the proportion of people living in poverty was estimated, going from 37.9% to 31.1%. The most prevalent deprivation among people over 65 was educational backwardness (46%). At the same time, there was a notable increase of 10.7 percentage points in the deprivation of access to health services, from 18.7% to 29.4%.

Source: In-house elaboration with data from Coneval (n.d.2).

ulation groups while at the same time highlighting gaps and a lack of a general vision to address most of the risks¹¹ present in the different stages of life. The current Social Policy in Mexico is based on the rhetoric of “First the poor,” and although the implementation of social programs has, in theory, the objective of benefiting society in areas such as poverty, income insufficiency, positive impacts on education, labor market and attention to vulnerable groups; in practice, the government and the strategy itself seem to be going backward by reflecting increases in social deprivation and maintaining practically the same levels of poverty for more than 50 years. This same reasoning questions the essence of the effectiveness of the social programs implemented and the budget allocated to them. With all the political and ideological impulse of the welfare programs, the evidence shows that the social policy implemented by President López Obrador gives less to those who have less and more to those who do not need it.

11 The associated risks are: mental and socioemotional health effects; development of diseases and health complications due to illnesses; malnutrition problems and the condition of permanent disability, risks linked to the right to health, the right to nutritious and quality food and the right to social security (Coneval, 2022).

FAILURES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

Currently, at least five elements have been identified that prevent the substantial reduction of poverty and keep it at the levels we already know. The **FIRST** refers to the very approach of conceptual poverty reduction, which is in charge of a single secretariat (formerly Sedesol, now Bienestar), forgetting that poverty is the result of failures such as low economic growth (Hernández, 2022) explained even with evidence. During 1950–2004, Székely (2005) found a strong inverse correlation between poverty and economic growth and a strong positive correlation between poverty and inequality (Hernández, 2022).

The **SECOND** refers to poverty as seen from a political–electoral connotation, emphasizing monetary transfers and stressing the importance of electoral politics rather than human rights. However, Mexico is one of the countries that know its poverty best, not only because it has been suffering from it for a long time, but also because it has tried to build mechanisms to reverse and address poverty, one of the reasons why poverty has not been reduced has to do precisely with the problem represented by political clienteles and their relationship with the State. Some analysts mention that it is necessary to change and

promote the creation of public policies at the level of targeted micro-interventions since they are decisive in the fight against poverty.

The **THIRD** factor concerns the lack of a rights-based approach in social policy, i.e., a lack of a vision of equal opportunities. The **FOURTH** refers to the lack of a systematic evaluation process that would allow for learning and, in turn, correct implementation and targeting errors (Hernández, 2022). The **FIFTH** exposes the insecurity and criminal governance that generates a link between criminals and states that may oppose each other or coexist in the same territory.

In the past, public policies have had significant effects on social inequalities through a) instruments such as universal basic income, b) housing loans, individual and family support programs (for example, for senior adults or people with disabilities), or c) universal health or education policies (Altamirano and Flamand, 2021). These policies have meant a redistribution of resources from government to society. However, unfortunately, they have depended on the political ideology that governments promote at the time, on electoral systems, and, of course, on how public policies are designed and implemented (Bryant, 2009). Given this, public action can reverse or

TABLE 6. POVERTY REDUCTION FAILURES

FAILURE	IMPLICATION
Failure	Poverty is combated under the responsibility of a single Secretariat with social programs aimed at the impoverished population.
Conceptual approach to poverty reduction	The monetary transfer underlines the importance of electoral politics rather than rights and results.
Poverty with political and electoral connotations	Social exclusion: Without a vision of equal opportunities and access to social rights, it promotes social exclusion and perpetuates underdevelopment.
Fighting poverty without a rights-based approach	Without a systematic evaluation analysis, it is not possible to generate learning, nor is it possible to correct and improve policies.
Lack of systematic assessment process	It allows formal and informal power groups to obtain economic and political benefits. They have the effect of appropriating, obstructing, and affecting public goods and services (coercive criminal governance) on the one hand and facilitating, providing, or improving them (non-coercive or legitimate governance) on the other (Hernández, 2023).

Insecurity and criminal governance

deepen inequalities, i.e., the existing bureaucratic capacities throughout the territory continue to promote public policies that perpetuate poverty and underdevelopment, reproducing patterns of discrimination and social exclusion through the fragmentation of social security.

ELEMENTS THAT TAKE PART IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST POVERTY:

1. CONCEPTUAL REDUCTION OF POVERTY.
2. POVERTY VISUALIZED AS ELECTORAL POLICY
3. FOCUS ON RIGHTS TO EQUALIZE OPPORTUNITIES.
4. LACK OF EVALUATION PROCESS.
5. CRIMINAL GOVERNANCE.

COVID-19 decade in social issues

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc in addition to those already mentioned above. Mexico suffered a sharp drop in Gross Domestic Product during 2020 (-8.4%), in addition to reporting cumulative deaths above half a million (793,625) (INEGI, 2023b), which placed our country among the top five countries with the highest number of deaths. The above figures alone suggest that the negative effects of the pandemic do not necessarily occur linearly and that a broader view is required to incorporate the heterogeneous consequences of this phenomenon on society and the economy, particularly on inequality.

The health crisis represented a severe blow affecting all social strata, especially the most vulnerable. The pandemic increased the global extreme poverty rate to 9.3% in 2020, while in 2019 it was 8.4%. The above implies that more than 70 million people were pushed into extreme poverty by the end of 2020, increasing the global total to more than 700 million (World Bank, 2022a). ECLAC estimated that the levels of poverty and extreme poverty reached in 2020 for the Latin American region had not been observed in the last 12 and 20 years, respectively, with a total of 209 million poor people at the end of 2020, 22 million

more people than the previous year for that region. Of this total, 78 million were in extreme poverty, which implies 8 million more than in 2019 (ECLAC, 2021).

In Mexico, according to figures from the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval, n.d.1), the percentage of the population with labor income below the cost of the food basket (absolute poverty) increased from around 40% in 2019 to 46% in 2020 and to 41% in 2021. Between the first quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2023, this percentage decreased at the national level by 1.1 percentage points, going from 38.8% to 37.7%, respectively (Coneval, n.d.6).

Given the panorama of falling GDP and increases in poverty due to the pandemic, Lakner *et al.* (2022) suggest that the reduction of the Gini index by 1% per year in each country has a more significant effect on the reduction of (absolute) poverty on a global scale than a 1% increase in GDP. This information speaks to the usefulness of focusing on inequality during the time of the pandemic, as it would allow us to have a better perspective of the consequences of this phenomenon on other key indicators that summarize the vulnerability of the population, such as poverty or access to health services, education, and other services.

As we have seen, although inequality persists in Mexico, there has been a downward trend in the Gini index in recent years. When considering the periods 2016–2018 and 2018–2020, we find that different phenomena explain each fall in inequality. In the first case, the fall in inequality results from the increase



Image: "Working poverty in Mexico stagnates: 49 million people do not have enough to buy the basic food basket" Photo: Jorge Fernández/Getty Images at <https://elpais.com/mexico/2023-08-29/la-pobreza-laboral-en-mexico-se-estanca-a-49-millones-de-personas-no-les-alcanza-para-comprar-la-canasta-basica.html>

in average median incomes for deciles I to VII and a slight loss in the remaining deciles. In the second case, the drop in the Gini index is due to a systematic fall in the average income of almost all deciles but much greater in deciles VII to X (Quintana & Salas, 2023). In Mexico, the COVID-19 pandemic strongly impacted inequality in all states of the country¹² through at least three mechanisms: a) closures of national activities resulting from efforts to contain the spread of the virus, b) disruption of global production chains, and c) border closures (Salas *et al.*, 2020). The combined result was a massive cancellation of jobs and a consequent family income decrease.

In 2022, the Gini index stood at 42.1, a reduction of 2.6 points compared to 2018 (Coneval, n.d.2). According to the ENIGH, income inequality presents a downward trend since 2016 with a Gini index of 0.499, dropping to 0.475 in 2018, 0.468 in 2020 and 0.460 in 2022 (INEGI, 2023a). When considering transfers to the income of Mexicans understood as income from social programs, retirements, and pensions, donations of

¹² For 2018 and 2020, income inequality shows a change for 22 states in the country. Patterns of inequality show that entities in the north of the country, with a greater industrial base and linked to exports, as well as regions with a strong presence in services (southeast), were most affected by the suspension of economic activities, reporting the largest increases in inequality indexes (Quintana & Salas, 2023).



Imagen: "Working poverty is me", people who work but stay in poverty". Photo: Cuartoscuro at <https://www.economista.com.mx/capitalhumano/Pobreza-laboral-soy-yo-personas-que-trabajan-y-no-salen-de-la-precariedad-20211203-0048.html>

money from institutions, government scholarships, and remittances, the gini coefficient decreases further for each year (0.449 in 2016, 0.426 in 2018, 0.415 in 2020 and 0.402 in 2022) suggesting a vital weight of transfers in reducing income inequality, coming to represent the second source of income of Mexican households after labor income.¹³

To better understand the evolution of inequality, it is necessary to consider how transfers are distributed within the income of Mexicans. Under this scheme, the weight of transfers by component is different for each income decile: the main component of the transfer income of the population with the highest income (decile X) comes from retirement and pensions, being up to 2.4 times greater than the weight of the main component of the transfer income of the population with the lowest income¹⁴ (decile I). This comparison suggests that the decrease in inequality in Mexico is partly because lower-income households receive less income from transfers. In comparison, households with higher incomes (decile X) accumulate more.

¹³ According to the 2022 ENIGH, the main source of household income is from labor income (65.7%), followed by monetary transfers (17.2%), income from rental housing (11.8%), property rent (5.2%) and other current income (0.09%) (INEGI, 2023a).

¹⁴ Benefits from government programs (INEGI, 2023a)

◀ WAGES AND LABOR INSECURITY

The leading cause of the persistence of poverty and the deepening of inequality in Mexico is the precariousness of the income received by workers, both formal and informal. That is, the minimum wage is insufficient to acquire the basic individual basket of goods, and the average wage is not enough to acquire the basic family basket of goods (Canto, 2019). Social policies in Mexico do not help combat poverty and inequality effectively, so it is necessary to design and implement redistributive policies to counteract the growing social polarization and encourage economic growth.

According to Hernández Licona (poverty expert and former secretary of Coneval), a successful policy by the federal government has been to increase the minimum wage, as it supports labor income and eventually reduces poverty in different ways. Progress in terms of minimum wage increases has been made since former President Fox, who stabilized the minimum wage so that it would stop falling in real terms. Peña Nieto initiated an increase above inflation, ensuring that increases did not impact other prices. López Obrador has pushed for even higher minimum wage increases without impacting unem-

ployment or inflation (Hernández, 2022). However, such an increase is still insufficient; although it complements social programs, we must be cautious in further aggressive increases to not be counterproductive due to its possible negative impact on employment and inflation.

In Mexico, the revision of the general minimum wage (SMG) for 2023 should move towards meeting the institutional goal of the National Minimum Wage Commission (Conasami): an amount sufficient to cover the cost of two basic urban food baskets¹⁵ (CB, for its acronym in Spanish). According to the analysis of Acción Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza (2022), some elements threaten the right to decent work. Namely, 71.5% of people who have a salaried job lack sufficient income (Acción Ciudadana Contra la Pobreza, 2022). According to Coneval (s.f.6), nationally, almost four out of every ten people were in working poverty during 2022, meaning their work income was less than a food basket's monetary value.

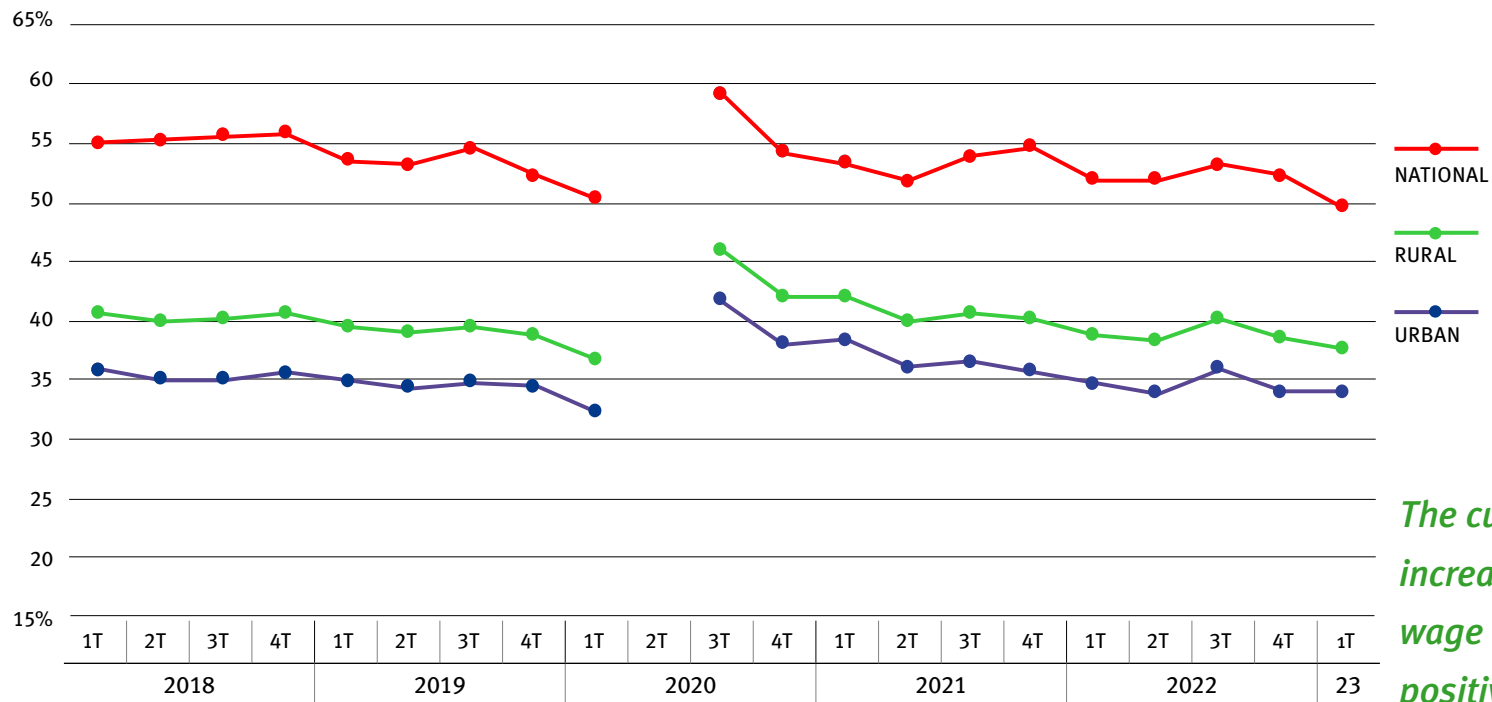
¹⁵ Conasami's Institutional Program 2019–2024 is supported by two considerations: 1) the SMG must be above the poverty line and 2) It must be enough for two people, who works and at least one more dependent person. Therefore, the minimum threshold is 2 CB. This threshold also allows households of 4 people, with two income earners, which is the most common, to also exceed the poverty line.

The progress in reducing working poverty receded with the arrival of the pandemic and the stoppage of economic activities. The highest point occurred in the third quarter of 2020 (3Q2020) when in-work poverty at the national level reached 46% in rural areas, 59.2%, and 41.8% in urban areas (Graph 13). The data on the working poor population from Coneval (n.d.6) show that the setbacks affected each state differently when comparing 2022 with 2019 (prior to the arrival of the pandemic). The entities where there were the most significant increases in working poverty in the fourth quarter of 2022 (4Q2022) concerning the fourth quarter of 2019 (4Q2019) were Zacatecas (+5.8 pp), Aguascalientes (+4.3 pp) and Guanajuato (+3.9 pp), while the largest decreases in working poverty were in Hidalgo (–10.8 pp), Nayarit (–6.1 pp) and Morelos (–5.0 pp).

The wage policy, via the increase to the minimum wage of the current administration, has increased it from 88.36 pesos in 2018 to 207.44 pesos per day by 2022. The variation is 88.8% realistically (Signos Vitales, 2022d). While this is significant and positive progress, specific problematic issues remain. In this regard, we highlight the following:

GRAPH 13. EVOLUTION OF WORKING POVERTY AT NATIONAL, RURAL, AND URBAN LEVELS

2018–2023



Source: In-house elaboration with data from Coneval (n.d.6).

The current administration's increase of the minimum wage is a significant and positive progress.

The price of the basic food basket has increased 24.48% so far in the López Obrador administration (Signos Vitales, 2022d). The price of the basic food basket sets the standard for measuring the quality of life of Mexican workers. Specialists in the field consider that the salary of a Mexican should be enough

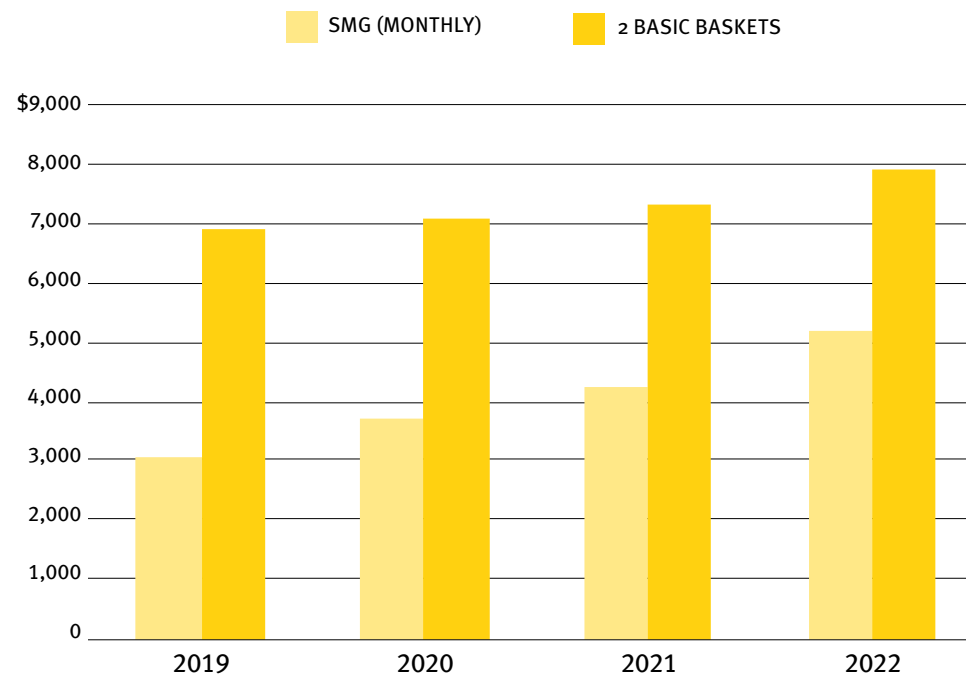
to acquire two basic baskets (CB), which coincides with Conasami: the minimum wage should be enough for two people (the worker and at least one more dependent person), which allows a 4-person household to overcome the poverty threshold. Therefore, the minimum wage threshold to buy 2 CB would have

to reach \$8,600 monthly pesos, almost \$287 daily (Acción Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza, 2022).

Another point to consider is the scope of the wage policy since it only covers the formal labor market. Workers outside the formal labor market (informal, about 60%) are excluded from any benefits obtained by the former. This situation implies that the group to which the measure applies (potential beneficiaries) is smaller than the universe (labor supply). In fact, the National Minimum Wage Commission recognizes that the potential beneficiaries of the minimum wage increase are 6.4 million formal workers (Government of Mexico, 2023), which represent only 10.9% of the employed population (58.5 million employed as of the first quarter of 2023) (INEGI, n.d.3). However, to the extent that these increases serve as a guideline for companies' wage policies, more workers could also partially benefit from these increases.

Graph 14 shows the evolution of the cost of two basic baskets per year and the evolution of the minimum wage until 2022. We can infer that the gap has been reduced at differentiated rates, and although it has indeed advanced each year since 2019, it has been reduced by 28% from 2019 to 2022 (Acción Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza, 2022). Put another way, in

GRAPH 14. COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MONTHLY SMG AND THE COST OF TWO BASIC BASKETS (URBAN)



Source: Acción Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza (2022).

2019, the gap between the SMG and the cost of 2 CB at that date was 123%. That is, the 2019 SMG lacked an adjustment of 123% to cover the cost of 2 CB in January of that year. By 2022, the gap has been reduced to 53%.

A substantial increase is needed to achieve the minimum wage target and overcome the poverty line. While the Border Minimum Wage (SMF, for its acronym in Spanish) has almost reached the cost of two basic baskets by the end of 2022, the vast majority of professional minimum wages (SMP, for its acronym in Spanish) are still below the amount of two basic baskets and the General Minimum Wage (SMG) is 110 pesos short (Acción Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza, 2022).

**THE WAGES POLICY
IS DIRECTED TO THE FORMAL LABOR MARKET:**

64 MILLIONS FORMAL WORKERS BENEFITTED
REPRESENT 10.9% OF THE OCCUPIED POPULATION.

THE INFORMAL LABOR MARKET CORRESPONDS TO
60% APPROXIMATELY

Adjustments to consumption and the effects on the food basket

A more accurate way of showing the lack of dynamism of the Mexican economy is reflected in the behavior of consumption (by companies and families), which maintains its poor upward trajectory after the collapse caused by the health crisis. As of May 2023, it is barely 5.8% higher than the level prior to the health crisis (February 2020) (INEGI, n.d.4). Progress has been extremely slow compared to other economies in the world.

Prior to the health crisis, consumption performance was very poor. Between December 2018 and February 2020, consumption had barely grown 0.6% in real terms. The slow progress was mainly explained by the fall in consumption of domestic goods (-1.7% in the same period). After the confinement, private consumption has shown some improvement, but not for that reason. This situation is because, between February 2020 and May 2023, the import of goods grew 42.2%, driven by the 52.8% increase in the import of non-durable goods¹⁶ (where food is included), while the consumption of goods and services of

¹⁶ Seasonally adjusted series using econometric methods based on INEGI's original figures.

national origin has barely grown by 1.7% in the same period. In other words, domestic consumption has remained almost the same level since the beginning of the recent federal administration (INEGI, n.d.4).

Through this analysis, we can observe two phenomena that generate concern:

1. Stagnation of domestic production, which supplies non-durable goods, leading to greater dependence on the exterior and,
2. High vulnerability of households to an exchange rate shock that triggers price increases.

In addition to structural problems, cyclical factors have put upward pressure on food prices, which have become more expensive in all regions of the country. Banco de México estimates that for 84.5% of households, the cost of the household consumption basket between August–November 2020 and June 2022 was between 8% and 17%. In just over 8% of households, inflation was above 17% (Banco de México, 2022). In addition, households with the lowest incomes (first quintile) report higher increases in the cost of the consumption basket than the rest of the population (13.3%). On the other hand, those households in the last quintile (the richest) show a minor increase in the cost of the consumption basket

(11.6%) in the same period (Banco de México, 2022). As might be expected, the evidence indicates that the lower the income, the more significant the impact of inflation on households' consumption basket and, consequently, on their welfare.

HOW DID FOOD COSTS RISES BETWEEN AUGUST 2020 AND JUNE 2022 AFFECTED HOUSEHOLDS:

FOR 84.5% OF THE HOUSEHOLDS PRICES VARIED BETWEEN 8% AND 17%.

HOUSEHOLDS WITH LOWEST INCOME REPORTED AN INCREASE IN THE COST OF THE BASIC BASKET HIGHER TO 13.3%

HOUSEHOLDS WITH HIGHEST INCOME OBSERVED A LOWER INCREASE IN THE BASKIC BASKET OF DE 11.6%

BANCO DE MEXICO, 2022

INCOME AND THE LOW LIKELIHOOD OF SAVINGS

In 2018 and 2021, the formal savings accounts of the population that has at least one financial product, either a savings account or card, a credit, insurance, or a retirement savings account or Afore between 18 and 70 years old, went from 67.8% to 60.2% respectively, according to the National Survey of Financial Inclusion (ENIF, for its acronym in Spanish) (INEGI, n.d.5). In these same years, the type of informal savings¹⁷ is the prevailing one, it went from 70.6% in 2018 to 60.2% of people in 2021. This considerable drop (−10.4 pp) is not only due to the increase in the adult stage population (5.8% or 4.59 million people) but also to the fall of 5.4 million people in this age group who had no savings during the year (variation of −14.3%) (INEGI, n.d.5).

Despite the sharp drop in informal savings mechanisms, people with only a formal savings account increased by 1,554,000 people (43% growth). That said, and given the drop in the total number of people who saved (formal and informal), the proportion of formal savings gained ground, going from 6.7% to 10.3% of

¹⁷ Informal savings are considered through the following mechanisms: borrowing money, buying animals or goods, in a savings bank, with family members or acquaintances, in a batch, and at home.

total savers in the same year. Nevertheless, between 2018 and 2021, there was a net loss of savings of three million 232 thousand people (INEGI, n.d.5).

On the other hand, for those who saved formally to realize their savings, they needed to have a savings account¹⁸. In this sense, up to 2021, 41 million 099 thousand people between 18 and 70 reported having a savings account. However, only 17 million 932 thousand people made use of them, and 77% of these people (13 million 802 thousand) live in towns of 15 thousand or more inhabitants; in turn, 44.7% came from women (6 million 170 thousand) (INEGI, n.d.5). In other words, the bulk of formal savings in our country is generated in the largest cities.

Another aspect to highlight in these years is that the increase in formal savings was mainly through payroll accounts (variation of 2,409 thousand people), pension accounts (variation of 312 thousand people), and investment funds (variation of 479 thousand people)¹⁹ (INEGI, s.f.5). This suggests that the

¹⁸ Refers to the holding of a bank account or financial institution that allows the person (account holder) to deposit and withdraw money, such as: payroll card, pension card, government support card, savings account, checking account, investment fund or other.

¹⁹ The sum of the differences does not equal the net change (1.6 million people) because an individual may report one or

population that increased its savings through formal mechanisms did so because it had a job, most likely a formal one, in a town of 15,000 or more inhabitants. Also, government intervention may play an essential role in the growth of formal savings given the aging population and the expansion of the senior citizen program.

◀ REMITTANCES ROLE

As stated in one of the Signos Vitales reports²⁰ (2022d), (2022d), it is noteworthy that remittances sent to Mexico are already almost equal to the total wage bill,²¹ and some entities or regions of the country have a more significant share of household income. In principle, such income could reduce poverty levels or increase the GDP of entire regions.

Based on the volume of transactions, it is easy to see that the average per remittance reveals municipalities where the collection far exceeds the national average (391.4 dollars as of the second quarter of 2022). Of the total municipalities in the country where at least

more formal savings mechanisms.

²⁰ Diagnóstico de México: Oscuras perspectivas [Diagnosis of Mexico: Dark perspectives] (Signos Vitales, 2022d).

²¹ Amount of total remuneration of employed persons.

one transaction was carried out (2.6 thousand) 1.3 thousand, the average per remittance exceeds the national average. These municipalities received 8.3 billion dollars from the 15 billion received (55.3% of the total) that quarter. However, let us consider those municipalities with very little migratory intensity, where they are unlikely to receive remittances. We identify 114 municipalities where the average remittance is at least double the national average. Of these municipalities, 90.4% are concentrated in just three Mexican states: Chiapas (52 municipalities), Oaxaca (45 municipalities), and Veracruz (6 municipalities) (Signos Vitales, 2023a).

Remittances captured by Mexico in 2022 amounted to 58.5 billion dollars (mmdd, for its acronym in Spanish) (Banco de México, n.d.). Growth has been very rapid: in 2018, they were just over 31 billion dollars. The distribution of remittances has not been equal among regions and municipalities, and new actors are playing a relevant role, as in Chiapas. Statistics from administrative records show that a large part of the country is receiving at least two remittances per household and in a proportion according to their populations much higher than that observed by official surveys such as the ENIGH (National Household Income and Expenditure Survey, for its acronym in

Spanish) and the ENIF. The ENIGH 2022 showed that the annual income from another country was 2644 pesos, multiplied by 37.6 million households at 18 pesos to the dollar, which adds up to only 5,523 million dollars of income from abroad.

For example, in 227 municipalities in the country, 72.7% of households receive two monthly remittances, each averaging US\$440.3, and in 39% of the cases, they are not migrant expellers (Signos Vitales, 2023a).²² The percentage of coverage in these municipalities is three times higher than in the Western and Bajío regions (the region that receives the most remittances in the country) and more than five times the national average (Cárdenas, 2023). Despite the enormous amount of remittances received by households in these municipalities, poverty remains entrenched. In fact, the average income from remittances (US\$880.6, assuming two transfers per household)²³ is above the extreme income poverty line.

Despite reasonable doubts about the origin of many remittances, the vast majority continue to be the product of the work of Mexicans in the United States,

²² Considering those municipalities with medium, low and very low migratory intensity.

²³ In-house estimation with data from Banco de México (Banco de México, n.d.).

which are sent to their families in Mexico. After deducting remittances received by foreigners in transit and those subject to suspicion, Mexican families receive nearly 52 billion dollars (about 89% of the total).²⁴ This amount represented about 3.6% of GDP and was equivalent to 12.5% of Mexico's labor income (wages), which totaled 8.53 trillion pesos as of the last quarter of 2022 (INEGI, 2022a).

At the same time, the increase in income has allowed a greater propensity to consume in various regions of the country, mainly in the center-north and south (variation of 1.7% and 1.2%, respectively) (Signos Vitales, 2023a). The second and third quintiles of the population have benefited the most. This higher propensity has significantly impacted the level of private consumption. If such transfers had not been received, consumption would have plummeted -11.6% instead of -10.6% amid the health crisis (Signos Vitales, 2023a). Therefore, income from remittances boosts consumption in some regions of the country and asymmetrically by income level. Also, the income (actually) captured by households has been insufficient to escape extreme income poverty.

²⁴ In-house calculations with information from Banco de México.



Image: "Remittances architecture" at https://www.bbc.com/mundo/cultura_sociedad/2010/09/100924_galeria_imagenes_mexico_arquitectura_remesas_jp

REMITTANCES CAPTURED BY MEXICO IN 2022 AMOUNTED TO 58.5 BILLION DOLLARS

IN 2018: ARRIVED OVER 31 BILLION DOLLARS.

IN 2023, 227 MUNICIPALITIES IN THE COUNTRY, 72.7% OF HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVE TWO MONTHLY REMITTANCES, EACH AVERAGING US\$440, AND IN 39% OF THE CASES, THEY ARE NOT MIGRANT EXPPELLERS.

IS THREE TIMES HIGHER THAN IN THE WESTERN AND BAJÍO REGIONS (THE REGION THAT RECEIVES THE MOST REMITTANCES IN THE COUNTRY) AND CORRESPONDS TO MORE THAN FIVE TIMES THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

NEVERTHELESS, POVERTY IS STUCK.





Image: <https://www.alcaldesdemexico.com/notas-principales/indigenas-en-el-cdmx-lo-mas-discriminados-edis-2017/>

DISCRIMINATION

ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL EQUITY

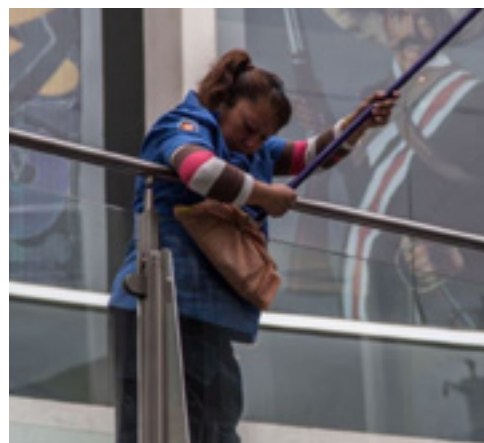
DISCRIMINATION

ethnicity and social equity

Vulnerability has become a social feature in Latin America. Poverty, inequity, and poor income distribution are only some of its components (Pizarro, 2001). The low level of development and the pandemic attributed to the SARS-CoV-2 virus has increased the complexity of its expression and its negative effect on the social environment, especially on historically vulnerable groups. In Mexico, a considerable proportion of the population suffers or has suffered structural discrimination: women, the elderly, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and communities, children, and adolescents, among other pop-

ulation groups (Solís, 2017), which promotes social inequality gaps in at least five institutional areas: a) labor market, b) education, c) housing/mortgage credit, d) criminal justice and e) health care, a phenomenon that has caused a deepening of gaps and the violation of social rights.

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Images: Racial, genre and socioeconomic level discrimination. Photo: UNAM en <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/capitalhumano/Facetas-del-racismo-La-realidad-laboral-de-las-personas-indigenas-en-Mexico-20230321-0100.html>

<https://www.copred.cdmx.gob.mx/comunicacion/nota/discriminacion-por-embarazo-la-penalizacion-de-los-cuidados>

Photo: Andrea Murcia/Cuartoscuro en <https://elpais.com/mexico/2022-03-01/las-mujeres-que-trabajan-no-pueden-crecer-la-radiografia-de-la-desigualdad-laboral-en-mexico.html>

education, c) housing/mortgage credit, d) criminal justice and e) health care, a phenomenon that has caused a deepening of gaps and the violation of social rights,²⁵ no additional legislation concretizes a social policy with a non-discrimination approach (Signos Vitales, 2021a).

With this, the Mexican State was legitimized as the main responsible for preventing, investigating, sanctioning, and repairing human rights violations, and several institutions were created. Unfortunately, the institutional dismantling of the current administration has reached those agencies designed to prevent

²⁵ Motivated by ethnic or national origin, gender, age, disability, social conditions, health conditions, religion, opinion, sexual preference, marital status, or any other condition that violates human dignity and has the purpose of nullifying or impairing the rights and freedoms of individuals.

and address it, such as the National Institute for the Elderly (INAPAM, for its acronym in Spanish), the National Council for the Development and Inclusion of the Disabled (CONADIS, for its acronym in Spanish), the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED, for its acronym in Spanish), and the National System for the Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents (SIPINNA, for its acronym in Spanish). Prevention mechanisms are almost non-existent, and the health crisis has further limited the scope of what was being done. The results suggest that there is neither action nor containment to stop the deepening of the gaps for those who need it most.

Unfortunately, the institutional dismantling of the current administration has reached those agencies designed to prevent, investigate, sanction, and repair human rights violations.

Struggle for gender equality: a schism that persists

According to the United Nations (UN, n.d.2), gender inequality is a widespread phenomenon in which women lack access to decent employment and face gender-based wage differentials. Around the world, women and girls are systematically deprived of access to education and health care, are underrepresented in economic and political decision-making, and are victims of violence and discrimination simply because they are women. The position of women in Mexico and the world is subject to situations of violence, abuse, and discrimination (among others) that affect their integral development (Signos Vitales, 2021b).

Evidence shows that inequality between men and women partly persists because public policies in many countries are still not designed and implemented with an actual gender perspective. Less has been achieved 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action²⁶, which includes different goals

²⁶ The GII is a gender inequality metric that uses 3 dimensions: 1) Reproductive health, 2) Empowerment and 3) Labor market (PNUD, 2023b.) A low GII value indicates low inequality between men and women and vice versa.

for the rights of women and girls worldwide, but little has been achieved (UN Women, 2015). The following section illustrates the persistence of violence against women, including the most extreme form of femicide violence. Although substantial efforts have been made to close gender gaps, the results show that there is still a long way to go to reduce vulnerability and achieve accurate equity between men and women.

◀ GENDER ADVANCES AND SETBACKS

Although Mexico has shown some progress in reducing gender inequality, there is evidence that in the 21st century, there is still prejudice against women in the last decade (UNDP, 2023a). Currently, nine out of ten men and women still maintain a bias against women; practically half of the global population still believes that men make better political leaders than women, and more than 40% of the world's population believes that men make better business executives. Sadly, one in four people believe a husband is justified in beating his wife.

According to the Director of the PNUD Human Development Report Office,

the social norms that undermine women's rights also harm society and hold back the expansion of development. Everyone wins if we ensure women's freedom and agency

PNUD, 2023b.

The latest data available when writing this report (2021) indicates that Mexico was ranked 75th out of 191 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (GII, for its acronym in Spanish).²⁷ The maternal mortality rate was 33 deaths per 100,000 live births; the adolescent birth rate was 55 births per 1,000 women between 15 and 19 years of age; the percentage of seats in parliament held by women was 49.8%. The population with at least basic education was 65.1% for women over 25, slightly lower than the percentage reported for men (66.7%). However, a worrisome indicator is the labor force participation rate, which in the case

²⁷ The G20 is composed of: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the European Union and the United States.

of women over 15 years of age was only 43.8%, while for men, it was much higher (75.4%) (PNUD, 2023b).

The evolution of the Gender Inequality Index (GII) reflects that Mexico has made efforts between 2006 and 2018 to reduce gender inequality by 0.09 points and is positioned 0.04 points behind the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which show the best achievements in reducing gender inequality. Between 2006 and 2018, Mexico's performance of 0.09 percentage points in reducing gender inequality was higher than the average performance of countries in the region (0.06 percentage points on average) (PNUD, 2023b). In a similar period (2008–2018), but now compared to the emerging G20 countries,²⁸ Mexico showed a less favorable performance, as its performance in reducing gender inequality (0.08 points) was slightly below the average performance of the countries in that group (0.11 points on average) (PNUD, 2023b).

²⁸The Global Gender Gap Index (GGI) has measured the world's progress towards gender parity in 4 key dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

CLOSING THE GENDER SCHISM

On the other hand, the World Economic Forum points out (through the Global Gender Gap Index)²⁹ that by 2022, the global gender gap has closed to 68% (WEF, 2023). At this rate, it will take the world 132 years to reach parity. However, economic empowerment could take up to 155 and 151 years to reach parity in economic participation. By 2022, Mexico ranked 33rd globally out of 146 countries, closing the gender gap by 76.5% (WEF, 2023) (Graph 15). It ranked fifth among Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries at the regional level.

Disaggregating the information by components of the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2023), the behavior in Mexico indicates the following:

1. In “educational attainment,” Mexico is close to parity in the sub-index with full parity in enrollment in secondary and tertiary education and 98.4% parity in the literacy rate.
2. The “Economic Participation and Opportunities” component ranks 110th globally, with 60.1% of the

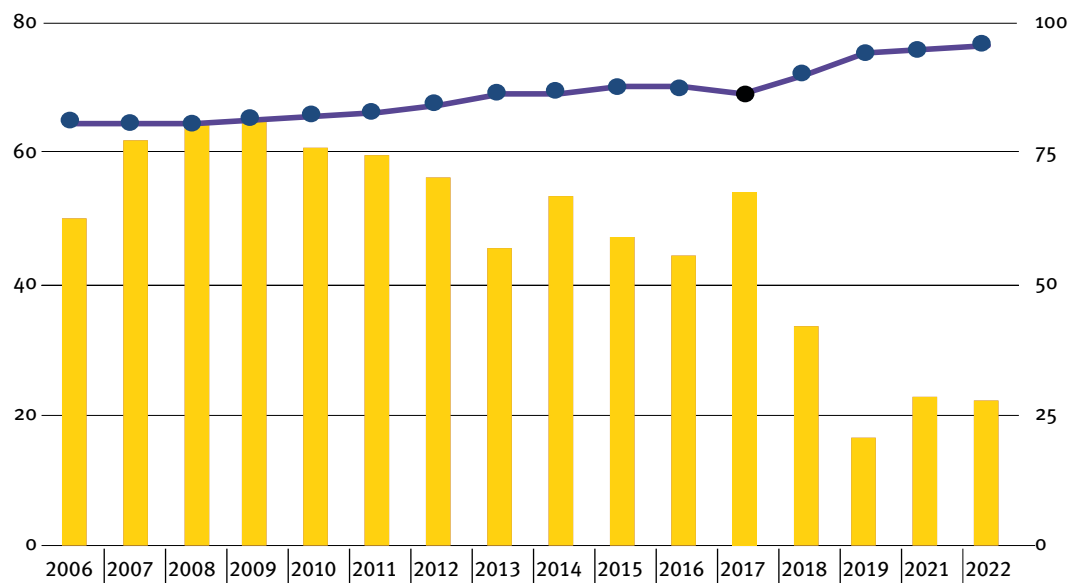
²⁹ The Global Gender Gap Index (GGI) has measured the world's progress towards gender parity in 4 key dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

gap closed in Mexico. The biggest challenge for women in Mexico is the persistent gender disparity in labor force participation (57.6%), and women’s estimated earned income is only 52.3% of that of men. In addition, only 38.5% of senior positions are held by women (WEF, 2023).

3. In “Health and Survival,” women have lost 2.4 years, and men have lost 1.5 years of healthy life expectancy since 2020, widening the sub-index gender gap by 0.4 percentage points (97.5%).
4. Regarding “Political Empowerment,” parity is 49% because within the parity of parliamentary positions, we have 42.1% female ministers and no female head of state yet. The country’s favorable performance is attributed to improvements in the political representation of women in the country. According to IMCO (2022), advances in political equality are associated with the political–electoral parity reform that has resulted in parity congresses at both the federal and local levels.

If Mexico wants to reduce the estimated time to close the gender gap between women and men, it must promote greater participation and growth of women in the labor market. To this end, incorporating women workers in the formal sector where decent and

GRAPH 15. EVOLUTION OF THE CLOSING OF THE GENDER GAP AND THE POSITION OCCUPIED BY MEXICO
RANKING FROM 2006 TO 2022



Nota: No data for 2020.

Source: In-house elaboration with data from the World Economic Forum (2023).

equitable employment conditions prevail is required. In this sense, Acción Ciudadana Contra la Pobreza (s.f) has followed the conditions of sufficient income as one of the fundamental labor rights, where it has been documented that the percentage of employed women without sufficient income is higher (77%) compared to men (62%).³⁰

As if this were not enough, the conditions women face in Mexico include inequalities determined by the socioeconomic situation of the household of origin. In our country, 55% of women born in the lowest income quintile manage to move up to another stratum in their adult life, compared to 75% of men with the exact origin. Likewise, women's participation continues to be low, as only 45% of women have a paid job. These differences do not show significant changes over time; therefore, we face what could be called a "scenario of persistent inequalities" in terms of gender (Colegio de México, 2018).

It is crucial to invest in closing the gender gap because by capturing the talent of more women, economic benefits for all are detonated. IMCO (2023a) estimated that in 2030, Mexico's GDP could be 15% higher than in 2020 if the conditions were in place

to add 8.2 million women to the economy. The gap requires the government and the public and private sectors to break down barriers limiting women's potential.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Every day, women suffer inequality and discrimination worldwide (Oxfam, n.d.2). Being a woman in Mexico also exacerbates social conditions and openly violates their social rights. Worldwide, one out of every three women suffers or will suffer male violence at some point in her life. In addition, 153 countries have laws that discriminate economically against women, and in 18 countries, husbands can still legally prevent their wives from working. Almost two-thirds of the 781 million illiterate adults are women; on average, women's wages are 24% lower than men's (Oxfam, n.d.2).

In Mexico, the panorama indicates that, in fact, violence against women has not only not disappeared but has increased. From 2016 to 2021, violence against women increased from 66.1% to 70.15%, according to the National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships 2021 (INEGI, 2021a) (Graph 16).

³⁰ Data as of the first quarter of 2023.

In Mexico, we still live under a panorama of discrimination, understood as social rejection based on prejudices, stereotypes, stigmas, and cultural values, which implies a structural phenomenon that includes practices that deny equal treatment of people, which in turn causes a reduction in the access and enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms of those who face it (Leite, 2019). Unfortunately, in the country, discrimination is a reality faced by different groups of the population, including women. The image of racism and discrimination is portrayed in the National Survey on Discrimination (Enadis, for its acronym in Spanish), which indicates that by 2022 the three main problems women face are: a) crime and insecurity (36.4%), b) violence against women (28.2%) and c) machismo (12.8%); the rest is attributed to inequality between men and women, lack of opportunities to find work and difficulties to combine family and work life (INEGI, 2022b).

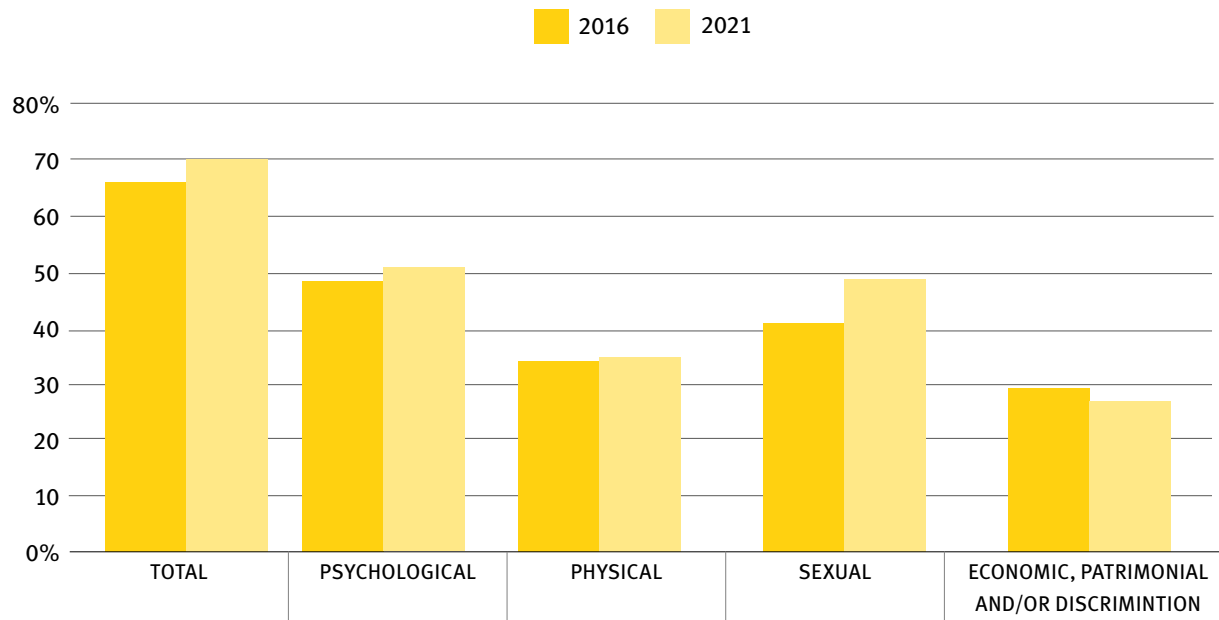
The results of the Enadis in 2022 report that 19.9% of women believe that their rights are very much respected in Mexico, while 36.7% believe that they are not very much respected. There are still 13.5% of women who stated that they had received a lower salary for doing the same job as a man in the last five years. Regarding the denial of rights, it is esti-

mated that 23.4% of women aged 18 years and older stated that they were unjustifiably denied any of their rights in the last five years (INEGI, 2022b). One out of every two (47.2%) reported being denied the right to receive support from social programs (Becas Bienestar, for example), followed by medical care or medication (36.5%) (INEGI, 2022b).

The institutional weakness we face is also reflected in access to help. In 2022, it was estimated that 89.7% of women who were unjustifiably denied any of their rights in the last five years did not report it to a local authority (clinic, work, office, community authority), and only one in ten (10.3%) did report it. Forty-four percent of the women did not report it was because they thought they would not be listened to or it was a waste of time (INEGI, 2022b).

Finally, the prevalence of discrimination in 2022 reported that 24.8% of the female population reported being discriminated against in the last 12 months. Of this, 35% reported being discriminated against for being a woman, higher than the figure reported in 2017 (30.8%). Part of the social and economic costs of violence and discrimination against women have a ripple effect throughout society. Women may find themselves isolated and unable to work and thus

GRAPH 16. TOTAL LIFETIME PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AGED 15 YEARS
TYPE OF VIOLENCE 2016 AND 2021



Source: Eln-house eaboration with data from INEGI (2021a).



Image: <https://www.forbes.com.mx/violencia-contra-la-mujer-deuda-social/>

lose their wages, stop participating in daily activities, and lose their essence and even their lives. Governments, organizations, and society must promote lasting changes that enact respect and integrity and ensure women's safety in practice.

The prevalence of discrimination in 2022 reported that 24.8% of the female population reported being discriminated against in the last 12 months. Of this, 35% reported being discriminated against for being a woman

THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GENDER INEQUALITY

As it has been illustrated in other Signos Vitales reports (2021a), the context of women in Mexico implies being immersed in a complex scenario full of disadvantages in which they face limitations in practically all stages of life. Without an open culture to give women a preponderant position in the development of the country and without decisive actions on the part of the different actors of power, among which the State stands out, it is foreseeable that customs and vices that affect the establishment of a level playing field for women and men in the country will continue to prevail.

Another denial of rights by gender includes the procurement and imparting of justice, which is one of the significant pending issues of the Mexican State (Signos Vitales, 2021b). Mexican impunity is one of the highest in the world and has both women and men as victims. The organization Impunidad Cero reported that by 2019, 51.4% of femicides and 89.6% of intentional homicides went unpunished. Even though the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (SCJN, for its acronym in Spanish) ruled that every violent death of a woman must be investigated as a femicide, only

one in three violent deaths were investigated as such in 2021 (Impunidad Cero, 2022).

Despite this, differences between men and women have been observed in the area of justice administration. The organization Reinserta (n.d.) has documented that justice for men and women accused of serious crimes is differentiated, with women receiving 35% higher corporal sentences. On average, men sentenced for serious crimes are given sentences of 17 years in prison, while the average for women is 23 years. It is also documented that, although 78% of women in prison report having access to a lawyer, they spend more money on their legal defense than men. While women spend an average of 155,593 pesos, men spend 100,521 pesos (35.4% less).

Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (n.d.) published its 2021–2022 report on the countries with the best conditions for women on welfare, economic, social, and political inclusion, justice, security, and women empowerment worldwide. The research yields results on policies and institutions that guarantee equal rights and opportunities for women, where of the 170 countries analyzed, the best qualified were Norway, Finland, and Iceland. Denmark and Luxembourg. Mexico was ranked 88th in the

study because despite having excellent parliamentary representation policies and anti-discrimination regulations, it has one of the worst scores in security (femicides), financial inclusion, and access to justice (PNUD, 2023a).

The pending task includes the victims of social policy, in addition to the victims in the criminal justice system and the administration of justice. It is necessary to rebuild the public apparatus to comply with the provisions of the reform to Article 1 of the Constitution in favor of the preservation of human rights, where it was decided that the State should be the axis of articulation of the national project, seeking a whole life with dignity for the affected groups, especially for women.

The best conditions for women on welfare, economic, social, and political inclusion, justice, security, and women empowerment worldwide in: Norway, Finland, Iceland, Denmark and Luxembourg. México was ranked 88th of 170 countries.

Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

GOVERNMENT SORORITY?

The current government has been particularly lax in approaching and prioritizing its gender agenda. The gender perspective within the current government's social programs is limited to monetary transfers that reproduce the fragmentation of social policies, resulting in low institutionalization levels. In addition, the attention to women in social policy is reflected in the budget exercise.

Since the beginning of the current administration, the budget cut included almost 50% of the childcare program in 2019 and was subsequently canceled in its entirety. This program supported mothers, single parents, or guardians who work, seek employment, or study, whose per capita household income did not exceed the Welfare Line (LB, for its acronym in Spanish), and who did not have access to child care services through public social security institutions or other means (Secretaría de Bienestar, 2015).

Consequently, institutional weakening for women's attention is imminent: institutional destruction has been a hallmark of the current federal government. In addition to the potential attack on constitutionally autonomous bodies through their colonization, the



Image: Closure of refugee houses for injured women at <https://www.elheraldodechihuahua.com.mx/local/podrian-cerrar-9-refugios-para-mujeres-victimas-de-la-violencia-por-politica-presidencial-3144650.html>



Images: Closure of children day-care centers at <https://www.hazruido.mx/reportes/mas-de-100-estancias-infantiles-cerraron-en-yucatan/>;

reduction of their budgets or their disappearance, and the constant attempts to control the leadership of the Judiciary, the current administration has eliminated social programs focused on supporting, mainly,

women. The two programs that stand out for their relevance are a) childcare centers and b) the budget reduction of women's shelters (Signos Vitales, 2021b).

Institutions have been weakened, which has meant the abandonment of women with actions such as the disappearance of the National Institute for Social Development (Indesol, for its acronym in Spanish) in 2022, leaving aside programs aimed at promoting gender culture, including issues of violence against women and inclusion. This decree is once again in line with republican austerity policies and leaves women who are vulnerable for gender reasons without benefits or support.

Despite the issuance of recommendations by different international organizations to promote women's empowerment and leadership, valuable opportunities have been lost in Mexico to fulfill these objectives truly. The current federal government has been reluctant to address demands and lags that millions of women have denounced; consequently, compliance with agreements and follow-up of programs at the international level is even more complicated. López Obrador's government has prioritized attention to political and electoral issues, leaving spaces for national and international redress for women.

Historical Ethnic Schisms

The vulnerable groups³¹ in Mexico have remained in an environment of constant abuse, and their health condition has been boosted by aggravating factors due to COVID-19. The arrival of the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been a sufficient condition that increases the propensity or risk of vulnerable groups to suffer an affectation of diverse nature, whether economic, physical, psychic, or emotional. However, there has not been the necessary attention for people under this condition. As we have already mentioned, historically, in Mexico, a large proportion of the population suffers or has suffered structural discrimination: women, senior adults, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and communities, children, and adolescents, among other population groups (Solís, 2017). Discrimination denies equal treatment to people who suffer it due to some prejudice, which generates an obstacle to enjoying their rights and fundamental freedoms (INEGI, 2022b).

³¹ The CNDH recognizes that issues related to vulnerable groups include migrants, victims of crime, missing persons, children and family, sexuality, health and HIV, equality between women and men, trafficking in persons, indigenous peoples and communities, persons with disabilities, prison system (persons in prison, torture, pronouncements), among others.

Unfortunately, in the 21st century, discrimination is present in our daily lives, so much so that the perception of respect for rights differs between men and women. However, only 19.9% of women in Mexico believe that their rights are respected a lot, 36.7% believe that they are respected a little, and 6.2% believe that they are not respected at all (INEGI, 2022b). Likewise, 44% of people over 18 years of age (regardless of whether they have children or not) would not agree that their daughter or son should marry a person living with AIDS or HIV, and 32.5% would not agree that their son or daughter should marry a person of the same sex. 25.6% would not agree if their



Image: "Indigenous and afrodescendants, the more discriminated in Mexico" at https://www.conapred.org.mx/index.php?contenido=noticias&id=341&id_opcion=291

son or daughter married a migrant or refugee, 12% would not agree if the other person had a disability, 11.4% if the religion was different from their own, 10.2% if they were Afro-descendant and 6.4% if they were an indigenous person.

Indigenous and Afro-Mexican peoples are at the bottom of our society's scale and face severe poverty, marginalization, injustice, discrimination, and racism. By 2022, Coneval recognized that 65.2 percent of the indigenous population (PI, for its acronym in Spanish) in the country lives in poverty and, in localities of less than 2,500 inhabitants, 78.7 percent of the indigenous population is in the same condition (Coneval, n.d.1).

The indigenous population has been associated with higher levels of precariousness than the rest and historically has been one of the population groups that faces greater social and economic backwardness. Since 2010 and until 2022 (the latest available measurement), together with children and adolescents, indigenous people are among the groups with the highest incidence of poverty. In 2022, a little more than 8.3 million people presented this condition. Although from 2010 to 2022, there have been reductions in the number of indigenous people with some

social deprivation, Table 7 illustrates the persistence of social deprivation within the indigenous population from 2018 to 2022 as a reflection of the balance in deprivation for the PI.

Poverty and economic resources are not the only obstacles historically vulnerable groups face; racism or discrimination also impact people’s well-being. The structural effects of discrimination can be seen in education, employment, and health, to name a few. It is very noticeable that school non-attendance is higher within each group concerning those who do attend school (Graph 17). That is, within the indigenous population, the percentage of those who do not attend school is higher (65.1%) than those who do (34.7%); the same occurs with the Afro-descendant population, migrants (Graph 17).

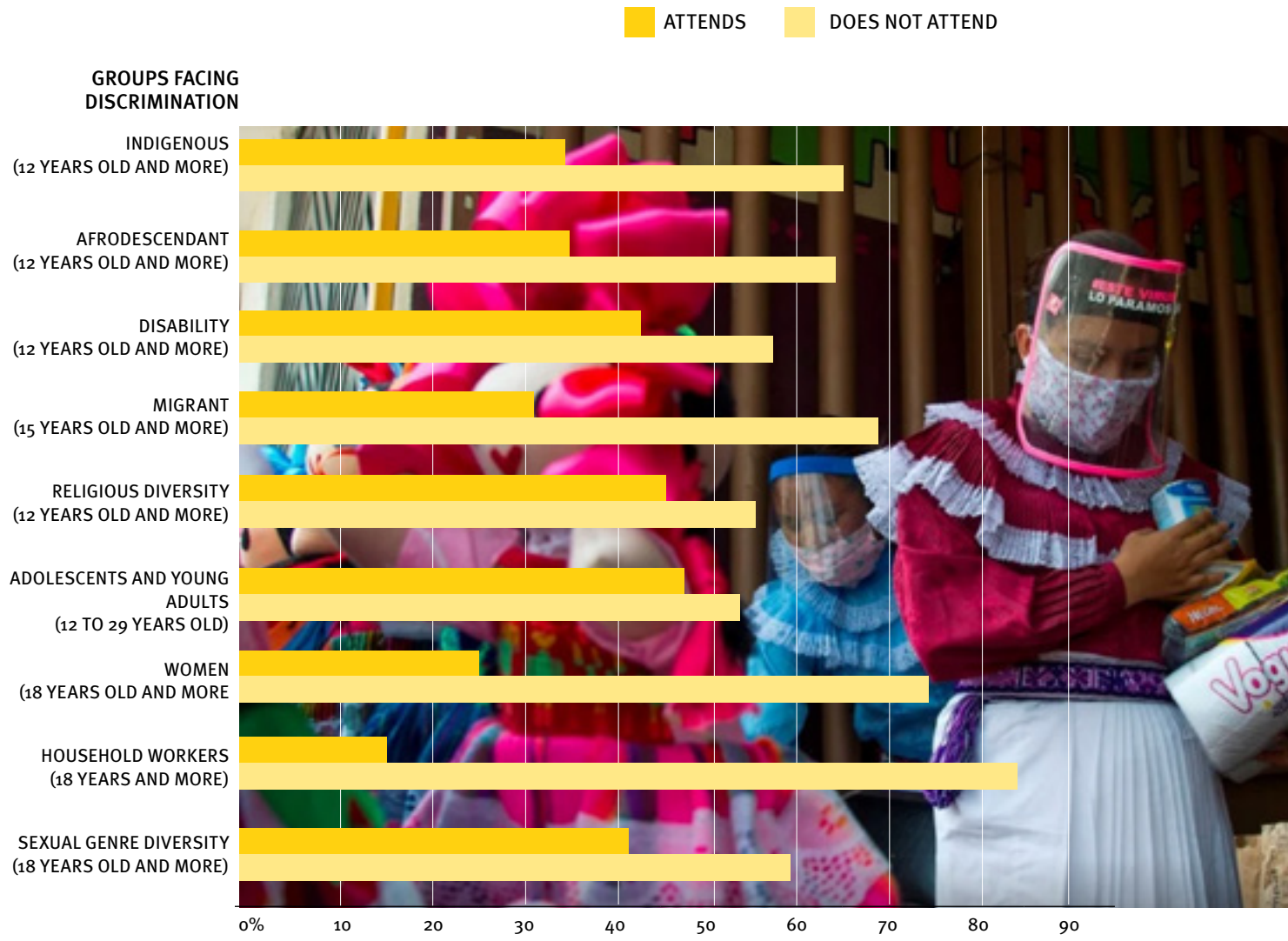
About the effects according to social benefits and access to health at the national level, only 15.8% of domestic workers have a written contract, the lowest percentage followed by indigenous people (17.5%) and people with disabilities (24%) (INEGI, 2022b) (Table 8). On the other hand, the people with the least access to public health services are also domestic workers, indigenous people, people aged 60 years and older, and people with disabilities.

TABLE 7. SOCIAL DEPRIVATION IN THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION

TYPE OF DEPRIVATION	INFORMATION TO 2022
Educational backwardness	It reports an increase in the indigenous population's educational backwardness percentage from 33.5% in 2018 to 35.3% in 2022.
Access to health services	It reports an increase of almost 4 times (3.7) what was reported in 2022 concerning 2018. The IP's lack of access to health services in 2018 was 15.3%; however, by 2022, it increased to 56.9%.
Access to Social Security	In this deprivation, there was a decrease of 2.8 percentage points. In 2018, 77.8% of the IPs were reported to lack access to social security, which decreased to 75% in 2022.
Quality of housing and living space	Such deprivation also increased from 28.4% of the indigenous population in 2018 to 26.4% in 2022.
Access to essential housing services	This deficiency increased from 57.4% in 2018 to 58% in 2022.
Access to food	Regarding access to food, 35.9% of the indigenous population reported having this deficiency in 2018, a percentage that decreased to 30.5% in 2022.

Source: In-house elaboration with information from Coneval measuring poverty in 2022 (Coneval, n.d.1).

GRAPH 17. STRUCTURAL EFFECTS OF DISCRIMINATION ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2022b).

Image: https://www.clarin.com/mundo/dolorosa-discriminacion-indigenas-mexico-juan-estudiante-14-anos-quemado-companeros_o_f2VIsUniOy.html

Unfortunately, social support has followed a clientelistic dynamic under this government, which at first looked after vulnerable groups but, in practice, reformulated the social pact with weakness regarding the needs of these vulnerable groups. According to Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH, for its acronym in Spanish), there are sectors of society that, due to certain conditions or characteristics, are more vulnerable to violating their human rights. Under this scheme, poverty violates multiple human rights, although it is not the only mechanism affecting vulnerable groups.

The indigenous population has been associated with higher levels of precariousness than the rest and historically has been one of the population groups that faces greater social and economic backwardness.

Poverty violates multiple human rights, although it is not the only mechanism affecting vulnerable groups.

**TABLE 8. STRUCTURAL EFFECTS OF DISCRIMINATION
ACCORDING TO EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS**

GROUPS FACING DISCRIMINATION	UNDER CONTRACT	ENTITLED TO PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
Indigenous (12 years and older)	17.5%	18.4%
Afrodescendant (12 years and older)	37.8%	42.3%
Disability (12 years and older)	24.0%	26.2%
Migrant (15 years and older)	44.1%	44.2%
Religious diversity (12 years and older)	30.5%	32.5%
Population aged 60 and over	17.5%	20.1%
Adolescents and young adults (12 to 29 years)	36.8%	36.3%
Women (18 years and older)	42.3%	42.7%
Household workers (18 years and older)	15.8%	16.6%
Gender sexual diversity (18 years and older)	47.2%	48.4%

Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2022b).

New social movements and emerging citizenships (LGBTIQ+ Community)

Citizenship in the modern world is a common political identity among people linked to each other by their common identification, with a given interpretation of a set of ethical–political values (Ferrer, 2017). In the face of new emerging communities, it is necessary that the State must be democratic to ensure that both the new communities and the groups that have been historically discriminated against reach a state of completeness in the recognition and free exercise of their social rights.

In the report “The Traces of Prejudicial Violence” (Los rastros de violencia por prejuicio as the title in Spanish) (Letrasese, 2023), an enormous task was accomplished by concentrating information on people of sexogenetic diversity. In 2015, the Inter–American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) (CIDH for its acronym in Spanish) stated that, in order to generate statistics on bias–based violence, States must take steps to create information and complaint systems that expressly incorporate variables on sexual orientation and gender identity, which, if not included, would fall back on a discriminatory practice

(Letraese, 2023). According to the National Survey on Sexual and Gender Diversity (ENDISEG for its acronym in Spanish) in 2021 (INEGI, 2021b), of the 97.2 million people over 15 years of age in Mexico, at least 5 million identify themselves as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex, Queer and more (LGBTI+ equivalent to 5.1% of the population).

It is essential to highlight that by 2022, there has been significant progress in the LGBTI+ community since, on the one hand, the recognition of self–chosen gender identity was endorsed. In June 2022, the First Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (SCJN) resolved the amparo in review 155/2021 regarding the possibility for children and adolescents (NNyA as an acronym in Spanish) to access the administrative procedure for the issuance of a new birth certificate due to the recognition of self–perceived gender identity contemplated in the Civil Code for Mexico City. With this resolution, the Maximum Court “recognized in the project submitted to vote that children and adolescents are holders of the right to identity in the same terms as adults and emphasized that gender identity should never be proven, so requesting expert opinions to determine it invades the private life of individuals” (Letraese, 2023).

On the other hand, the work of the Mexican Social Security Institute (Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social), which presented in May 2022 the protocol for care in Social Security for persons belonging to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transvestite, transgender and intersex (LGBTITI, as an acronym in Spanish) populations, intending to improve the care received by the Institute's beneficiaries and users belonging to these communities, through respectful and dignified treatment, is also noteworthy.

Despite the advances, discrimination in its different forms still derives in its most violent tone, the murders against people of sexual diversity. In the last 5 years, there have been at least 453 violent deaths of sexually diverse people: 92 in 2018, 117 in 2019, 79 in 2020, 78 in 2021, and 87 in 2022 (Letraese, 2023). Homicides are the most extreme form of violence, and it is presumed that such killings were for reasons purely related to gender orientation, identity, or expression. Trans women were the most numerous victims, with 48 trans-femicides. This figure is equivalent to 55.2 percent of the total cases. The highest percentage of weapons used in community homicides was firearms (37.9%), followed by knives (19.5).



Image: "Mexico turns back to LGCTI community who fled from Central America" Photo: END at <https://efeminista.com/orgullo-2022-aumento-discursos-odio/>

Of the 87 cases registered in 2022, only 20 alleged perpetrators were identified, 11 are in criminal proceedings, 6 are reported as detainees, 2 more are in custody, and 1 more is a fugitive.

These aggressions not only end the lives of people but there is also evidence of non-lethal violence. Letraese takes 354 incidents, of which 50.6% correspond to verbal aggressions, 20.3% to physical aggressions, 19.8% to psychological aggressions, 6.5%

to sexual aggressions, and 2.8% to unjustified detentions. In the context of widespread discrimination against historically vulnerable groups minorities and the invisibility of emerging communities, it can lead to the most violent form of aggression, which is homicide. Discrimination as an expression of prejudice is a practice that denotes social content, a collective context in which prejudice is constantly produced and legitimized.

The panorama reflects the need to promote a culture of prevention and measurement of the risk experienced by LGBTI+ people in Mexico. It is necessary to continue working to recognize sexual orientation and gender identity/expression of people as conditions that place them in positions of particular vulnerability that cannot go unnoticed by the authorities and justice agencies (Letraese, 2023).

No public policy for people with disabilities



In Signos Vitales, we have addressed the precariousness of the lives of people with disabilities (2021a). In 2022, Coneval's multidimensional poverty measurement reported an increase in the population with disabilities vulnerable due to social deprivation from 28.1% in 2020 to 34.8% in 2022. As if that were not enough, a significant increase in the lack of access to health services is reported, reaching 36.7% in 2022, while in 2020, it was 24.8%. This further violates the rights of people with disabilities.

In the absence of a preventive culture, Mexico has moved under an environment of constant abuse. The National Survey on Discrimination (Enadis, for its acronym in Spanish) (2022) shows that 31.9% of people with disabilities stated that the main problem is that streets, facilities, and transportation are inadequate for their conditions, followed by the problem of the costs of care, therapy, and treatment (21.7%) (INEGI, 2022b) (INEGI, 2022b).

In the employment sphere, practically one out of every two persons with disabilities (44.9%) perceived

that they were discriminated against a lot when looking for a job, and two out of every ten persons (23.3%) stated that they perceived much discrimination in government offices or services. Most worryingly, one in three (30.7%) said they were unjustifiably denied any of their rights in the last five years. Of these, one in two (44.5%) reported being denied support from social programs (Becas Bienestar, for example), followed by denial of medical attention or medicines in 44.5% (INEGI, 2022b).

In addition to the above, by 2023, only four out of 123 programs belonging to the Coneval list of Federal Social Development Programs and Actions 2023 somehow attend people with disabilities: a) Attention to Public High School Education Schools with students with disabilities (28.5 mdp), b) Program of Attention to Persons with Disabilities (28.2 mdp), c) Pension for the Welfare of Persons with Permanent Disabilities (37.1 mdp) and d) Attention to Persons with Disabilities (0.3 mdp) (Coneval, 2023).

The action of society is decisive in order to fill the gaps of a State lacking policies with a disability perspective. In this sense, the Foundation for the Inclusion and Development of Persons with Disabilities, A.C. (Findedis, s. f) has implemented actions through

programs and activities, the empowerment and social inclusion of persons with disabilities through education (courses and workshops on sexual and reproductive rights), employment (promoting decent employment through training, skills development and linkage with companies) and the defense of their rights, advocating for the respect of the human rights of persons with disabilities with a gender perspective and intersectionality.

The achievements of this foundation so far include, among many others, 500 people with disabilities assisted, 200 people with disabilities included in the labor market, and 80 companies allied in the inclusion. Likewise, it has achieved links with companies such as Amazon, Seguridad Omega, Conacyt, Scotiabank, Banamex, Aeroméxico, Nestlé (a total of 15 organizations), training, and awareness workshops. The above reveals that the focused action denotes measurable, consistent, and accurate results, something the federal government has not achieved even with the budget.

Migration and lack of human rights

Mexico is part of the main migration corridor worldwide. The corridor from Mexico to the United States of America is the largest in the world, with about 10.9 million people (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021). Despite being a country that receives millions of migrants per year, there are no policies designed for the dignified treatment and respect for the human rights of migrants.

The growing flow of people needing international protection in Mexico has increased recently. Since 2013, a trend has begun to increase the number of applicants. During the previous six-year term (2012–2018), COMAR registered 29,570 applications. In 2019, 70,310 applicants were registered; in 2020, due to the pandemic generated by COVID–19, a decrease was reported registering only 41,000 people. In 2021, there was a rebound in applications with 130,000 applicants; among the triggers attributable to forced displacement in the countries of origin were 1) the economic crisis due to the pandemic, 2) the devastating hurricanes, 3) the rise of Biden to the presidency of the United States who offered to bring a more favorable policy to migrants by dismantling the “Stay

in Mexico” program. In the same year, 2021, a historic level was registered with applicants from 110 countries of origin, accompanied by an extraordinary arrival of Haitians to the country, which surpassed Hondurans as the main applicant nationality for the first time. In 2022, 119,000 applicants were registered (Ramirez, 2023).

In response, the governments of Mexico and the United States of America tightened immigration controls, implementing measures aimed at preventing the transit of migrants, increasing active duty military personnel on the U.S.–Mexico border, detaining and expelling more significant numbers of migrants, and, according to some reports, allowing excessive use of force against them by security officials (MMC, 2020; Astles, n.d.). The number of migrant detentions in Mexico increased from approximately 8,500 in January 2019 to 13,500 in January 2020 (MMC, 2020). In 2021, the Border Patrol apprehended nearly 100,000 migrants. In November 2022, 206,239 migrant apprehensions were recorded by the Border Patrol at the U.S.–Mexico border (Pew Research Center, 2023).

One of the violations of the right to security of migrants is human trafficking. As a growing and lucra-

tive criminal practice, it violates migrants by forcing them into forced labor. The case of drug cartels in Mexico is a clear example (Rabasa *et al.*, 2017). Likewise, according to the Report “In the Mouth of the Wolf,” prepared by the Foundation for Justice and the Democratic Rule of Law, Doctores sin fronteras reported that 68% of refugees and migrants benefiting from care programs were victims of multiple forms of violence, including sexual violence. At the same time, the organization Human Rights First (HRF) recorded more than 800 violent attacks against asylum seekers, including cases of murder and rape, with the crime of kidnapping for ransom also being present, where at least 200 minors were affected. In addition, the report mentions that between November 2019 and January 2020 alone, 80 kidnappings and 19 attempted kidnappings of asylum seekers incorporated into the “Stay in Mexico” program were documented.

Detentions, expulsions, and the treatment of migrants are red lights in terms of human rights. The Foundation reported this for Justice and the Democratic Rule of Law (FJEDD for its acronym in Spanish). Among its findings, it found that Mexico has opted for the implementation of a migration policy with a human rights approach, making use of the National Guard and other military bodies as a migration con-



Image: "At least 39 people died at migratory center in Ciudad Juarez" at <https://es-us.noticias.yahoo.com/mueren-39-personas-centro-migratorio>

trol apparatus, even though this goes against the normative provisions on migration and international human rights law (FJEDD, 2022).

Contrary to the promises of the current administration in Mexico, human rights reports show a systematic violation of migrants' rights. Mexican border cities, along with immigration stations and temporary stays, have found themselves under extreme pressure from the large number of migrants coming mainly from the so-called Northern Triangle, who are waiting for an appointment with U.S. authorities to request asylum. The practices and policies focused on immigration containment have represented violations of people's human and fundamental rights in the context of migration. According to the Special Report "Situation of Migratory Stations in Mexico" (CNDH, 2019), such degrading treatment refers to torture, cruel and inhumane treatment and reports of episodes that occurred in several migration stations in the country, such as insults, threats, humiliation, and beatings.

Conclusions

The loss of social rights is evident when analyzing Mexico's social balance. Although there was much room for improvement in previous years, the current situation suggests that the country has deepened gaps that, although they result from structural processes, could have diminished their effects. However, the evidence shows a deepening of social gaps due to a precise reproduction of policies without focusing on rights or "non-discrimination." So much so, the levels of poverty and inequality have remained the same since 1970, and despite social interventions, there are still failures indicating that 50% of Mexicans live in poverty. The role of governments has included various strategies to combat poverty with little significant results.

As we have already mentioned, Mexico is one of the countries that best knows its poverty, and given the tools used to evaluate it, the deterioration of social welfare and the constant violations of social rights become evident. The detriment of human development, the increase in social deprivation, the levels of poverty, the data of backwardness, and the low or null social mobility are nothing more than expres-

sions of the fragility of a State that has not provided answers or solutions to problems of years ago. As if this were not enough, the arrival of the pandemic is the only one that has not discriminated against anyone. The lack of action and containment of its effects has left long-term damage that, if not remedied, will continue to produce effects that threaten the rights and needs of a social Mexico with lamentable performance.

The detriment of human development, the increase in social deprivation, the levels of poverty, the data of backwardness, and the low or null social mobility are nothing more than expressions of the fragility of a State that has not provided answers or solutions to problems of years ago.



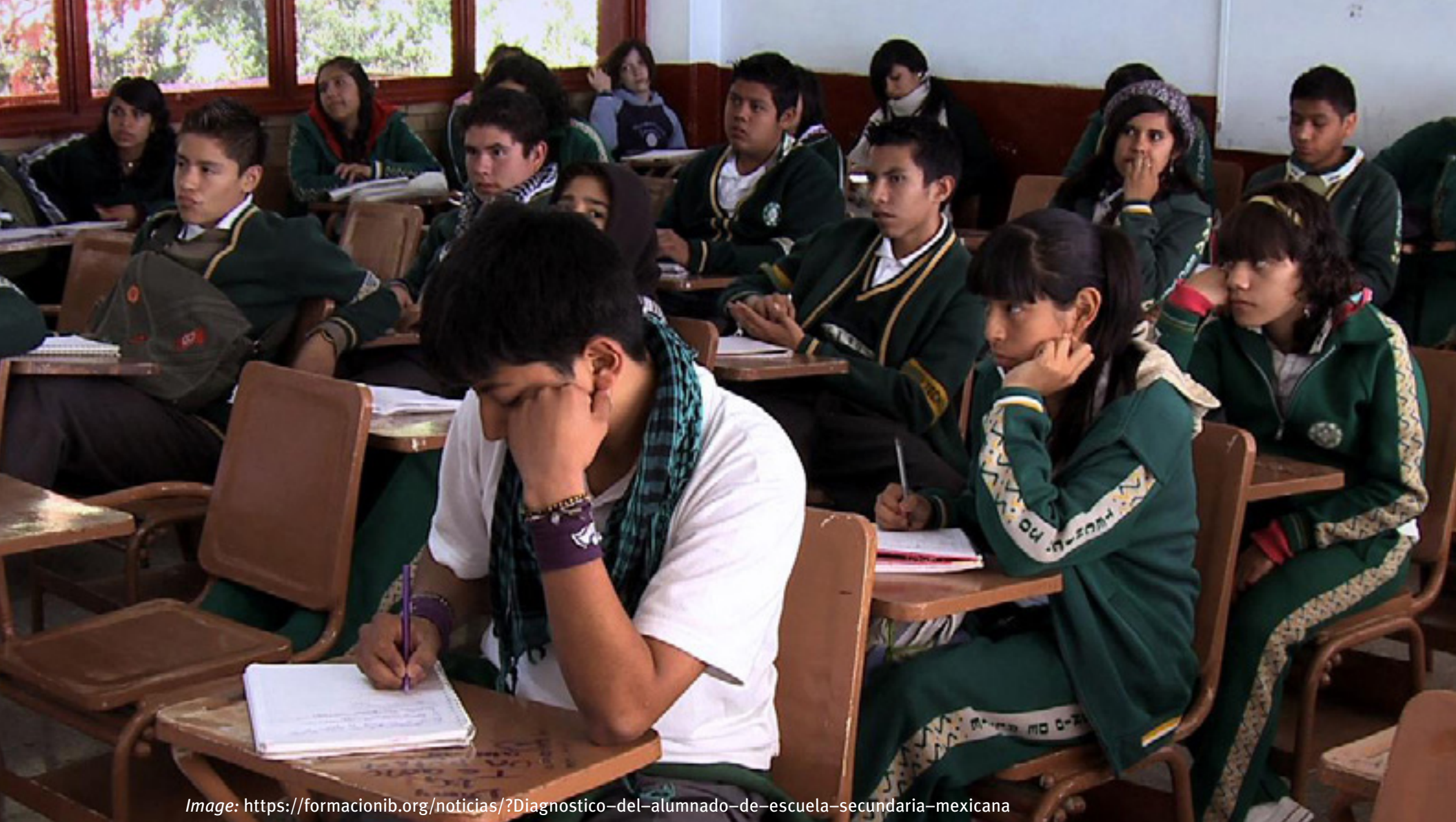


Image: <https://formacionib.org/noticias/?Diagnostico-del-alumnado-de-escuela-secundaria-mexicana>

EDUCATION **A BURDEN IN MEXICO**

EDUCATION: a burden in Mexico

The importance of knowledge and learning in students' future has been recognized for years (World Bank, 2022b). There is tangible evidence that investing in human capital (education) directly impacts economic growth (Schultz, 1972). This combination of education and economic growth is the spark that drives the development of nations and is also one of the determinants of inequality. The impact of social, institutional, macroeconomic, and education indicators on the behavior of inequality shows that increased public spending, education, and public investment have a positive impact on the decline of inequality³² (González y Martner, 2012).

³² For 27 OECD member countries and 18 Latin American countries (including Mexico) 1990–2010.

In this sense, the most important determinant of “future productivity” is the current formation of human capital (De Hoyos, 2020) and, to the extent that the pandemic has affected the determinants of future productivity, its effects will be visible for several generations, productivity that comes through access to health and education that guarantees learning (De Hoyos, 2020). However, to ensure this concept of future productivity, comprehensive support for institutional capacities in the education sector is necessary, starting obviously with the public budget and spending.

Although public spending on education (from basic to higher education) occupied 13.9% of the total gov-

ernment budget, a figure above the OECD average (10.6%), about the size of the economy (as a percentage of GDP), public spending on education in Mexico is below the OECD average, even below the average of Latin American and Caribbean countries as of 2018 (Graph 18). Thus, education systems that obtain good results prepare children from early stages, continuously reform themselves, optimally use their resources and information to improve, be accountable, and identify more effective policies (UNESCO, 2020). Under this scheme, education financing indicators make it possible to know what economic resources the country dedicates to its education system and how they are used.

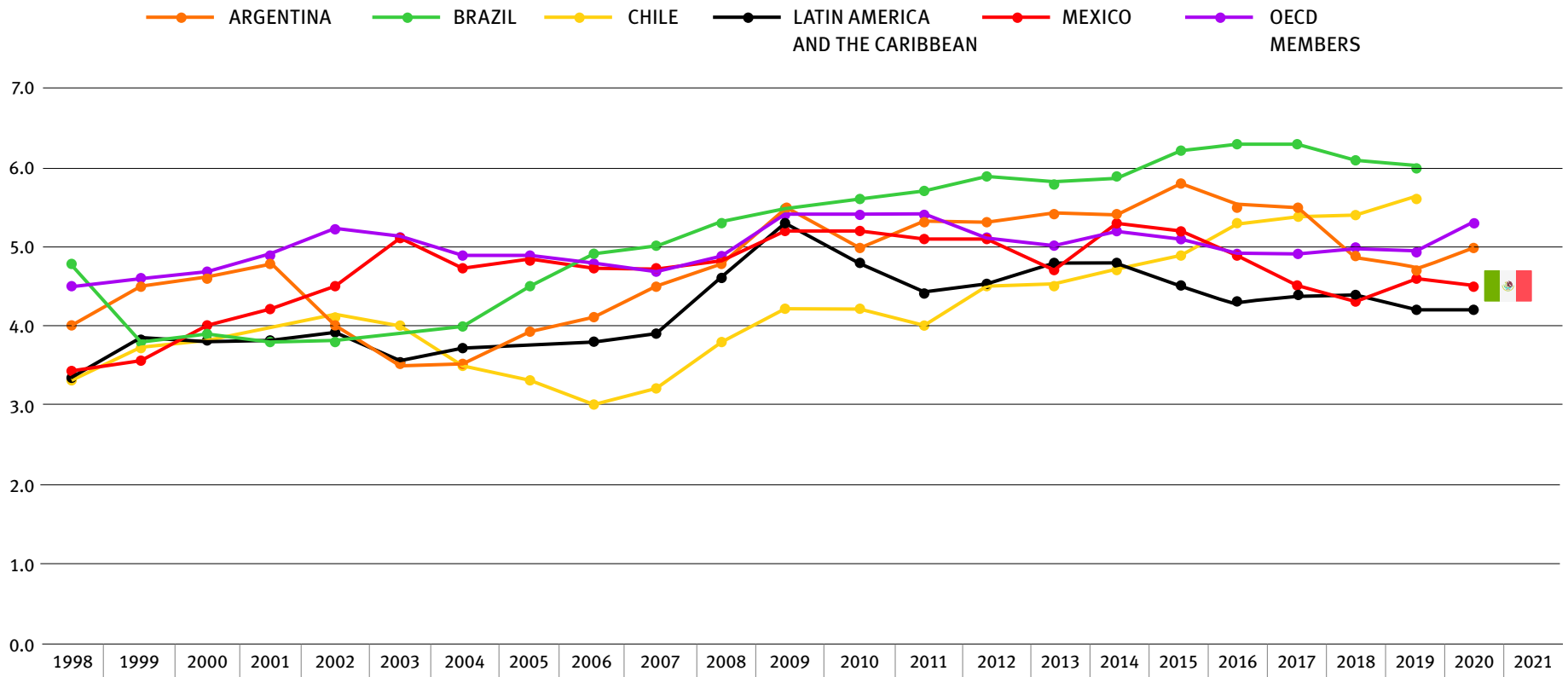
In 2019, Mexico spent 4.6% of its GDP on education. That amount is equivalent to 3,577 dollars per student from primary to higher education, which compares to the 11,990 dollars spent on average by OECD member countries for the same year (OECD, 2022). That is a difference that reaches 8,413 dollars per student. Spending by educational level shows different levels of spending per student. Spending on education per student in 2019 indicates that Mexico allocates 3.6 times fewer resources per student in primary education and 3.9 times less in secondary education. Mexico allocates 2,977 dollars per student at the primary

level (approximately 58 thousand pesos) when the average for OECD member countries was 9,923 dollars (a difference of almost 7,000 dollars). In the case of the secondary level, the expenditure was 2,890 dollars (more than 50,000 pesos) versus the 11,400 dollars average allocated by member countries (close to 200,000 pesos), which represents a difference of 8,510 dollars (OECD, 2022).

In the case of higher education per student, the gap is more significant than for other levels of education, although it continues to be one of the lowest levels among OECD member countries. It is noted that the average expenditure per student in Mexico is 7,341 dollars per year³³, while the OECD allocated 17,559 dollars. Thirty percent of this investment was allocated to research and development in the average of OECD countries, while in Mexico, only 15% was allocated (OECD, 2022). The difference is about 10,000 dollars (about 180,000 Mexican pesos) per student. It is evident that higher spending on education does not always mean better results. Nevertheless, the amounts allocated to education determine the capacities of education systems, and their analysis is tran-

³³ This means that it is \$4,400 higher than the primary level and \$4,500 higher than the upper secondary level (OECD, 2022)

GRAPH 18. PUBLIC SPENDING ON EDUCATION
(% OF GDP)



Source: In-house elaboration with data from OCDE (2022) and Llanos (2022).

scendental since an unequal allocation of resources amplifies inequalities (Llanos, 2022).

Public spending in Mexico is associated with an unequal budget allocation. In 2020, at the very begin-

ning of the pandemic and with a well-marked path by this administration regarding its educational priority, spending in this sector amounted to one trillion 51 billion pesos (mdp), of which 75.7% was public spending and the rest (24.3%) private spending.

The percentage of public spending totaled more than 795,716 million pesos, and almost 70% of public resources benefited 21.9 million students in the first five income deciles. Spending on primary education was progressive since 54.9% was concentrated in the first three deciles (30% of the poorest population) while spending on Higher Education was regressive. Decile I concentrated only 5.6% of spending for this level, compared to 11.3% and 6.3% for deciles IX and X, respectively.

Although the data suggest that secondary education (EMS) spending was concentrated in the first six income deciles, such spending did not prevent school dropouts even before the pandemic (Llanos, 2022). In fact, as we will see below, education spending did not contain school dropout, let alone learning loss, an effect that widens the social gaps of an entire generation.

Education policy timeline

The educational actions implemented in a decade have different implications for the lives of Mexicans. The current administration's education policy has remained in an environment of constant transition, partly affected by the COVID-19 health contingency. The most significant changes in education policy during the last decade began with the implementation of the 2013 education reform, a period in which teacher training and evaluation were prioritized and, among other actions, autonomy was granted to the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE for its acronym in Spanish), which was a unique reference in terms of evaluation and generation of guidelines in education.

As of 2019, the revision of the 2013 education reform stands out. The elimination of INEE was replaced by the National Commission for the Continuous Improvement of Education (Mejoredu), a decentralized body without constitutional autonomy, as the institution in charge of generating the evaluation criteria. With this, the systematic and public evaluation of national and state-representative learning assessments was canceled³⁴. This gave way to a period of opacity by

³⁴ Such was the case of the National Learning Plan (Planea)

ceasing to make public the educational statistics information generated by the Educational Information and Management System (SIGED for its acronyms In Spanish) (Signos Vitales, 2023b). Table 9 describes the changes and implications of education policy in the last ten years. It begins with the approval and implementation of the 2013 education reform under the government of Enrique Peña Nieto, which was reversed in 2019 by President López Obrador, giving way to the New Mexican School. It also exposes the latest changes with their respective implications for the educational system, students, and society.

During the current administration, the educational authorities have attempted to promote this sector through an improvised strategy based on four axes: a) the revaluation of teachers, b) the implementation of new programs and educational content, c) the provision of scholarships for students and d) improvements in infrastructure (through LEEN). However, as expected, given the precariousness of these public policies' design, construction, and implementation, the results have fallen far short of the set initial goals. Some of these failures have to do with a)

tests, inherited from previous evaluations such as the Exams for Quality and Educational Achievement (Excale) and the National Evaluation of Academic Achievement in Schools (Enlace).

the inexistence of teacher training programs in the use of Information Technologies, nor in the use of digital platforms to monitor the learning process, b) an educational project inconsistent with the needs of students, disqualifying the educational work built over more than a century, c) the regressive nature of educational scholarships, which suggests that those who have more receive more and those who need them more receive less, and d) irregularities in the expenditure for school infrastructure improvement (LEEN).³⁵



Image: "Morelos Teaching Habilities Institute offers courses in Leon" at <https://www.elsoldeleon.com.mx/local/instituto-de-capacitacion-docente-morelense-ofrece-cursos-de-capacitacion-en-leon-8805203.html>

³⁵ The "The School is Ours" program had irregularities in its 2020 expenditures; the Federal Superior Audit Office (ASF) found that 1,757 schools did not demonstrate that more than 573 million 605 pesos had been used to improve the infrastructure and equipment conditions of these schools.

TABLE 9. CHANGES AND IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN THE LAST TEN YEARS 1/2

YEAR	ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	IMPLICATION
2012–2018	Approval and implementation of the educational reform	It prioritizes teacher training and evaluation.	Autonomy is granted to the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE for its acronym in Spanish) for standardized evaluations for students and teachers.
2018	BEGINNING OF ANDRÉS MANUEL LÓPEZ OBRADOR'S ADMINISTRATION AND ESTEBAN MOCTEZUMA AS SECRETARY OF EDUCATION		
2019	The action of reversing the 2013 education reform and the emergence of the New Mexican School.	The disappearance of INEE and the implementation of Mejoredu generates uncertainty regarding the future of standardized evaluations.	Nace la Nueva Escuela Mexicana, programa que canaliza recursos directamente a las escuelas para mejorar su infraestructura sin mecanismos de transparencia. Con el desmantelamiento del INEE, se pierde información de aprendizajes básicos, informes del estado que guarda la educación, directrices de política educativa, la descentralización de capacidades en las entidades federativas y la evaluación docente.
2020	The change of the Secretary of Education by Delfina Gómez and the arrival of the COVID–19 virus	Widespread school closings.	It was not until June 6, 2020, that the Education Sector Program (2020–2024) was presented. In addition to being untimely, it was a disjointed document, without the context of the health crisis amid the global pandemic and without measures to address school closures and the imminent loss of learning.
2021	Staggered return to the classroom		
	Cancellation of the Full–Time School (FTE) Program	On February 28, the SEP decided to eliminate the Full–Time Schools (Escuelas de Tiempo Completo.) and to allocate all of their resources to the program La Escuela es Nuestra (LEEN) to improve the infrastructure of the schools.	The elimination of the CTEs meant that 3.6 million students lost extended school days and food services. This increased educational risks (learning time), increased inequality risks (effects on the most vulnerable communities), and undermined the commitment to comprehensive education since the CTEs addressed nutritional, cultural, and sports aspects.

TABLE 9. CHANGES AND IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN THE LAST TEN YEARS 2/2

2022	Publication of the new curricula and a change of leadership at SEP by Leticia Ramirez	On August 20, 2022, the agreement establishing the curriculum for preschool, primary, and secondary education emerged, seeking to transform the basic education system fundamentally.	Without support or clear guidelines, it is intended that teaching in basic education will be without subjects and with elements of each school's social and cultural contexts. It is unclear how they will contribute to mitigating the pandemic's impact.
2023	Teacher training for the new curriculum begins despite its suspension	The "Intensive Continuing Education Workshop for Teachers" for appropriating the 2022 curriculum began in early January 2023.	From the pedagogical point of view, the study plans and programs seek to remove and add subjects in formative fields, blurring mathematics and reading comprehension. Assessment of learning is eliminated, leaving a significant inability to adapt to a new educational reality (Backhoff, 2021).
	Statistical information on education (SIGED) is no longer made public.	In April 2023, INEGI published in the Official Gazette of the Federation the agreements in which the Statistical Information of the Educational Information and Management System (SIGED) is removed as information of national interest.	The decision implies the loss of relevant public information to know the National Education System's state and the education policy's design and evaluation. This decision also jeopardizes the continuity of information generation, updating, and dissemination.
	Preparation and distribution of textbooks to State education authorities (2023–2024 school year)	One year after the publication of the new curriculum framework for basic education in August 2022, the distribution of textbooks to the states has begun, despite an injunction that orders the SEP to stop printing the books and review their content in order to comply with the regulations, outlined in the General Education Law.	Among the risks found in the textbooks for Basic Education are: 1) that they significantly reduce the systematic teaching of mathematical thinking, 2) they contain conceptual and organizational errors, 3) a lack of transparency has characterized their elaboration, 4) they do not consider the lags that deepened with the pandemic, 5) in the material for teachers, ideological reflections predominate to the detriment of didactic orientations. The right of the NNJ to quality education is put at risk, given the uncertainty of the scope of the curricula (Reyes and Fernandez, 2023).

Source: In-house elaboration with information from IMCO (2023b), Backhoff (2021), Signos Vitales (2023b) and Reyes & Fernández (2023).

The current administration's policy has stoned the plans, programs, and projects that, in another historical moment of Mexico, gave rise to defined routes that, although they did not culminate in success in all cases, undoubtedly maintained a progressive advance in the Mexican educational sector. The unavoidable objective of education is to form intelligent, autonomous, critical, and fully aware of the reality where they live. However, the path that marks the current educational policy reveals the implementation of "an imprecise project, under a doctrinaire and fanciful vision that renounces to educational quality and an interconnected society" (Guevara Niebla, 2023).

The unavoidable objective of education is to form intelligent, autonomous, critical, and fully aware of the reality where they live.

Regressive effects of the 4T programs

One of the changes in the design of social policy that affects education has been, on the one hand, the decrease in the budget dedicated to programs focused on the population living in poverty (as was the case of Prospera) and, on the other hand, the increase in non-targeted programs (such as the Benito Juárez Scholarships) (Jaramillo–Molina, 2022).

The federal program Prospera³⁶ and other conditional transfer programs have been shown to positively affect education levels among impoverished youth (Parker and Todd, 2017). Part of the documented benefits of Prospera were: a) the increase in 1.4 years of schooling in those who had access to the program, b) the Impact on Higher Secondary Education, as early exposure to Prospera increased the probability of completing at least one grade of higher secondary education by 10 to 15% for both sexes; where the impacts of secondary and higher secondary education vary from 40 to 70% concerning baseline rates. Fi-

³⁶ One of the most widely known of these programs is the Mexican Prospera model, which began operating in 1997 as the Education, Health and Food Program (PROGRESA for its acronym in Spanish) and then the Oportunidades Human Development Program (from 2002 to 2014), to finally consolidate Progresas.

nally, c) refers to increases in educational attainment among children. Educational impacts have represented notable increases in educational attainment among children who grew up with Prospera (Parker and Todd, 2019). Conditional transfer programs, such as Progresá scholarships, provided intergenerational benefits, a pivotal strategy to equalize opportunities.

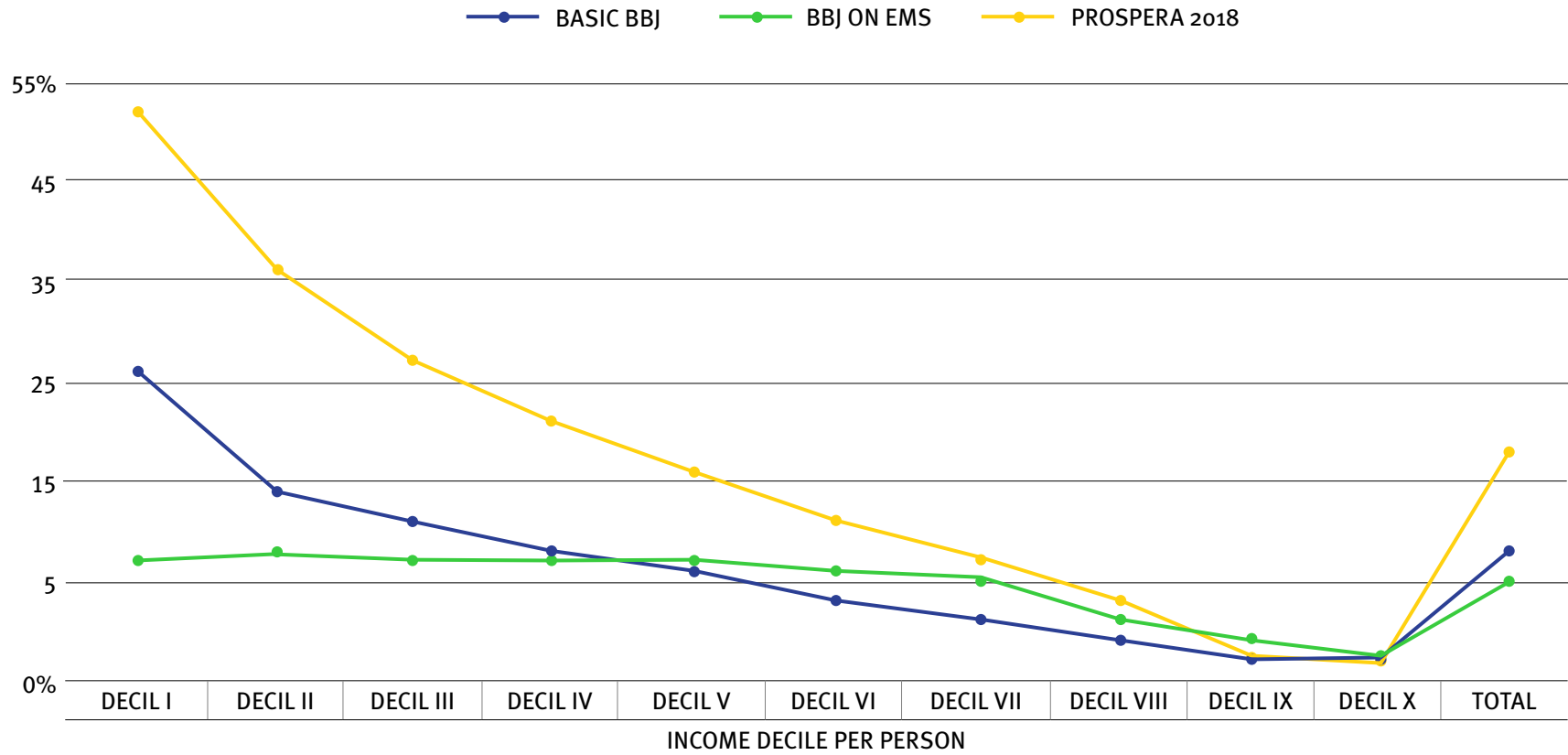
Contradictory to the promotion of the 4T, in 2020, none of its programs linked to Bienestar reached the coverage that Prospera had in 2018. (Jaramillo–Molina, 2022). This same trend, but now with data updated to 2022, is repeated. Graph 19 shows that only 26% of the poorest students in the country (decile I) receive the “Benito Juárez de Educación Básica” (BBJ Básica) scholarship and 7% the “Beca Benito Juárez de Educación Media Superior” (BBJ in EMS). In 2018, more than half of the poorest households (52%) of Decile I were beneficiaries of Prospera (Jaramillo Molina–2023).

The universality of the Bienestar social policy has had less reach than the social policy implemented before the current administration. The effects indicate that fewer impoverished students receive support (Becas Benito Juárez) than households received in 2018 with Prospera. The change implies the loss

of positive impacts on education, income, economic status, and even within the specific female labor market, as Prospera also affected the female labor market (Parker and Todd, 2019). The forcefulness of this evidence in the face of President López Obrador’s poorly achieved social policy indicates that his strategy has not been successful and reveals a lack of administrative and resource management.

The universality of the Bienestar social policy has had less reach than the social policies implemented before the current administration. The effects indicate that fewer impoverished students receive support (Becas Benito Juárez) than households received in 2018 with Prospera.

GRAPH 19. PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS THAT RECEIVED SCHOLARSHIPS IN 2022 VS. HOUSEHOLDS THAT RECEIVED PROSPERA BY INCOME DECILE



Source: In-house elaboration with information from Jaramillo-Molina (2023).

Effects on inclusive education

The educational system must end the barriers that impede learning for all students, regardless of their social and economic conditions. The communitarian perspective proposed in the new basic education curricula goes in the opposite direction to the educational needs of a school population damaged by the pandemic and pressed by the demands of a future already present, loaded with demands for those who aspire to find a worthy place in the society of their time.

The practices suggested for achieving such community education imply subordinating to a second level the individual needs corresponding to each student's learning process. Herein lie the most harmful consequences that this way of understanding the educational process will have to produce, since without attention to the personal needs of each student, the nonwaivable purpose of advancing in the establishment of the foundations of a genuinely inclusive education that adapts teaching to the educational needs of students is abandoned (UNESCO, 2018).

For decades, UNESCO has been insistent in promoting that education systems do everything necessary

to establish the premises that make inclusive education³⁷ a reality. Without it, equality of opportunity in this area, which is a determining factor in the life of the human being, will not be more than a mere discourse belied by reality. In order to make educational justice a reality and satisfactorily meet the principle of equality, inclusive education must focus on quality since it is essential to provide its benefits to all students regardless of their condition.

Because of the purposes it serves, inclusive education is indispensable and, at the same time, challenging to achieve. It is unwaivable because it responds to the constitutional mandate that orders the State to ensure an education of excellence for all, regardless of the incredible variety of conditions that students present, according to their origins, socioeconomic conditions, and family, physical, and intellectual differences. It is simultaneously a challenge since it poses to the educational system the need to carry out all the necessary efforts and changes to overcome all

³⁷ Inclusive education implies compliance with the principle of universality in education systems. This universality requires the capacity to ensure the admission of all children and young people of age to all stages and grades of basic education, regardless of their social, economic, physical and cultural condition. It also implies the commitment to ensure that they remain in school for the time necessary to complete the corresponding schooling.

kinds of standardizations that ignore differences and prevent inclusion.

In Mexico, in order to achieve equity, inclusive education is a necessary category because it addresses differences and achieves individualization to the maximum extent possible. It should also be a tool that promotes inclusive practices and, simultaneously, intense practices of cooperation, collaboration, and solidarity, indispensable to meet the principle that orders the inclusion of all those who make up the educational community. Our country is still far from achieving the objectives of inclusion. In order to advance in this sense, we would have to carry out the actions directed towards this objective through indispensable gradual changes. That is to say, to build the capacity to adapt to the great variety of conditions represented by a student body of significant numerical proportions and immense differences in social, geographic, economic, and human aspects in all their aspects.

Our educational system should face this challenge through intense and permanent preparation to test a capacity of adaptation achieved gradually and progressively to individualize each student's possibilities and difficulties to achieve indispensable learn-

ing. The educational system must use the division of authority by states and regions, governed by principles and guidelines that allow maximum attention to each child to advance in this direction. This seems to be a condition for the education system to acquire the capacity to lower the barriers that cause dropout, low achievement, and, consequently, great inequality in the student body's attention.

It would be very complex to demonstrate the method by which the communitarianism that is currently proposed will address the problems that inclusive education demands; on the contrary, by abandoning attention to this indispensable obligation, the system prepares itself to increase the backwardness, increase the dropout rate and stop educating and informing students under the principles and criteria established in Article 3 of the Constitution.

◀ Teaching: challenges and weaknesses

The current educational proposal of the Federal Government proposes to revalue the teaching profession, placing the teacher as the most critical element, but does not allocate sufficient resources to achieve this. Investment in teacher training has almost disappeared, even though it is necessary and urgent to develop and implement strategies, close learning gaps, and ensure academic continuity. However, for this to be possible, it must be strengthened and trained, an action that goes beyond improving the salaries offered throughout this administration as a form of political clientelism.

Table 10 shows teachers' challenges and weaknesses throughout the current administration, where, contrary to the search for their revaluation, some elements limit teachers' capabilities. Among the elements described are teacher training, social valorization, working conditions, evaluation challenges, resistance to change, and lack of innovation.

Contrary to the revaluation of teachers, in 2021, only 240 million pesos were allocated for teacher training, with a 49% cut to the Professional Teacher Development program (Fernandez and Herrera, 2021).

Likewise, four budgetary programs disappeared: a) the National Program for School Coexistence, b) the Teaching Career Program, c) the Program for the Development of Significant Learning in Basic Education, and d) the Program for the Strengthening of Educational Excellence). A cut of 89% was contemplated for teacher research just when support for developing pedagogical strategies is most needed (Fernández and Herrera, 2021). Once again, a contradictory panorama to the image shared with the teaching population in the country.

Regarding the recent increase in teachers' salaries, President López Obrador said he would apply a salary increase of 8.2%, allocating more than 42 billion additional pesos to the budget. Since 2018, the Federal Government proposed to manage and pay all teachers in the country under two arguments: a) to achieve more significant salary equity and b) to generate transparency. However, with just over a year to go before the end of the current administration, the evidence again belies the original proposals of the Executive. The longed-for teacher salary equity has not been achieved and is immersed in a sectorial opacity and discretionary management of educational information, as never before seen in the modern history of Mexico (Llanos and Sánchez, 2023).

TABLE 10. CHALLENGES AND WEAKNESSES OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

CHALLENGES AND WEAKNESSES	DESCRIPTION	CURRENT OVERVIEW
TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING	There is a need to strengthen the initial training of teachers, ensuring that they acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to provide quality education. There is also a need for continuous training that allows them to be updated in pedagogical methodologies, the use of educational technology, and effective teaching–learning strategies.	In 2023, each teacher will have just 85 pesos for their annual training, less than the amount granted in 2016 when 1,644 pesos per teacher was allocated.
LOW SOCIAL ESTEEM AND WORKING CONDITIONS	Teachers in Mexico face challenges in terms of social recognition and working conditions. Salaries and workloads can be low, affecting teachers' motivation and commitment. In addition, the lack of incentives and professional development opportunities can limit the interest and attraction of talent to the teaching profession.	Of the total number of continuing education courses given to teachers in 2022, only 13.3% were on apprenticeships, while 48% included general topics and 9.3% community topics.
EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY CHALLENGES	A more holistic approach is needed that considers student outcomes and the quality of teaching, continuing education, and other relevant factors. Also, the lack of a culture of accountability can limit teacher improvement and professional development.	The educational panorama lacks elements that would shed light on the shortcomings in learning, teacher training, or promoting scientific programs. Even though the supposed interest of the current administration is the reevaluation of the teaching profession, by 2023, 1,056 million pesos have been earmarked for Professional Teacher Development, 79% less than what was allocated in 2018.
RESISTANCE TO CHANGE AND LACK OF INNOVATION	Some sectors of the teaching profession may show resistance to change and the adoption of new pedagogical methodologies, innovative educational approaches, and educational technology. This may hinder adaptation to the digital era's needs and demands for quality education.	Resistance to teacher change slows down any educational reform process. It has been possible to identify barriers related to pedagogical aspects associated with Information Technologies (ICTs) (Padilla, 2018).

Source: In-house elaboration with information from Padilla (2018) and Signos Vitales (2022d).



Image: "How much earns an Elementary School teacher" at <https://laverdadnoticias.com/mexico/SEP-Cuanto-gana-un-maestro-de-primaria-20220905-0076.html#&gid=1&pid=1>

Llanos and Sánchez (2023) explain that the differences in resources allocated to teacher salaries translate into salary inequities within and between states. In 2022, the average annual teacher salary was \$329 thousand 75 pesos; however, this salary can reach up to 3 million 817 thousand 404 pesos per year (Baja California). It is worth noting that Oaxaca is the entity with the highest proportion of teachers with the lowest salaries and the lowest educational efficiency rates (Llanos and Sanchez, 2023). In 2022, 295,493 mdp were allocated for the salaries of 889,383 teachers. This meant 66.2% of the Fund of Contributions for Educational Payroll (FONE) resources. In 2018, the federalization of the payroll was announced, which means that the federal government would be

in charge of the educational payroll of all teachers nationwide so that, supposedly, the entities would have greater economic solvency. However, there are indications and evidence that this program was managed under criteria of high inequity, opacity, and few incentives for educational equity.

Regarding salary inequality, the average annual salary of teachers was 329,75 thousand pesos; however, there are teachers with a salary of up to 4 million pesos (10.6 times the average salary³⁸). These salary differences are associated with the different types of teachers' contracts, who may have more than one position, work hourly and in both modalities, as well as the entity where they work.

Regarding salary inequality, the average annual salary of teachers was 329,75 thousand pesos; however, there are teachers with a salary of up to 4 million

³⁸During 2022, the annual salary distribution was: Up to \$236,291 between 10.2% (State of Mexico) and 60.1% (Yucatan) of teachers receive this salary. More than \$236,291 and less than \$262,800 between 1.7% (Baja California) and 54.3% (Oaxaca) of teachers. More than \$262,800 and less than \$371,293 between 15.3% (Chiapas) and 56.7% (Tabasco) of teachers. More than \$371,293 and less than \$1,227,552 between 9.4% (Oaxaca) and 44.5% (Baja California) of teachers. More than \$1,227,552 between 0.2% (Oaxaca) and 2.4% (Baja California Sur and Sonora) of teachers. These salary differences could be associated with the type of teacher contract.

pesos (10.6 times the average salary). These salary differences are associated with the different types of teachers' contracts, who may have more than one position, work hourly and in both modalities, as well as the entity where they work.

Regarding opacity, 1,371 basic education teachers worked in multiple entities (not always adjacent). In addition, teachers were registered with up to six positions in ten different schools. These are practically impossible components to generate a quality teaching service where there are evident signs of corruption and discretionary management of the assignment of positions. Without effective accountability mechanisms to address these irregularities, this problem will continue for a long time.

Finally, in terms of incentives for educational equity, the National Education System must be able to attract, develop, motivate, and retain the most effective teachers. As well as providing adequate working conditions and a structure of remuneration and incentives and attracting talented teachers to the schools that need them most. Oaxaca is the state with the highest proportion of teachers with the lowest salaries and the lowest rates of educational efficiency (Llanos and Sanchez, 2023).

Gaps: no action or containment

GENERATION PANDEMIC AND LEARNING LOSS

Globally, our learning crisis has worsened with the arrival of SARS-CoV-2. Learning poverty among children and youth is one of the most basic indicators to describe the dimension of the crisis (World Bank, 2022b). High rates of learning poverty are an early sign that education systems have failed to ensure that infants and youth develop their fundamental and critical skills; therefore, in many cases, they are far from achieving target four of the Sustainable Development Goals on Universal Quality Education for All (UN, n.d.4). Learning poverty³⁹ results in children being unable to acquire the technical and higher order skills needed to thrive in increasingly competitive and demanding labor markets.

The State of Global Learning Poverty Report confirms that learning poverty was very high even before the pandemic hit: in 2019, nearly six in ten children

³⁹ Learning poverty refers to the complications to read and understand a text adequately in the case of reading and, in the case of mathematics, the incompetence to solve problems with 3-digit divisions in 10-year-old boys and girls.

(57%) did not acquire even minimal literacy proficiency at age ten before the pandemic hit. Even more troubling, progress against learning poverty had already stalled before the health crisis. The new data show that between 2015 and 2019, global learning poverty increased even further, 53%, which was the benchmark when the learning poverty indicator was launched. This stagnation marks a shift from the 2000–2015 period when global learning poverty had fallen from 61% to 53% (World Bank, 2022b).

In Mexico,⁴⁰ Pakistan, and South Africa, learning losses were more significant among girls than boys. Data measuring the actual learning levels of children in school systems (reopened around the world) in many cases corroborate the predictions of significant learning losses. For example, data available for Brazil (in São Paulo, one year after the start of the pandemic), India (in Karnataka), and some states in Mexico show learning losses equivalent to the extent of school closure, meaning that one year of school closure corresponds to approximately one year lost in learning (World Bank, 2022b).

⁴⁰ The proportion of students belonging to the high Socioeconomic Level (SES) who cannot read simple text increased by 15 percentage points and by 25 percentage points for those belonging to the low SES (World Bank, 2022b).

In the exclusive case of Mexico, in *Signos Vitales*, we had already made visible the concern about the loss of learning (Signos Vitales, 2022b). That document found that students lost up to 1.5 years of learning from 2019 to 2021 after school closures. Losses in learning, such as reading and mathematics, were more profound for the youngest (under ten years old) and the poorest, elements that undermine the opportunities of those who have the least at the earliest ages (Hevia *et al.*, 2022). Concern for the accumulation of lags also includes the quality of learning of 28.7⁴¹ million children and young people of learning age. If the trend of deterioration continues, there will undoubtedly be greater “learning poverty.” That is complications in reading and understanding a text properly in the case of reading and, in the case of mathematics, incompetence in solving problems with three-digit divisions in ten-year-old boys and girls.

Another effort was carried out by academics and researchers from the Universidad Iberoamericana to measure the loss of learning in elementary and high school education. In the project “What did we learn in school during the pandemic?” it was found

⁴¹ Total number of children and young people enrolled nationwide in compulsory education (preschool, primary, secondary and high school) according to the Population and Housing Census 2020 (INEGI, n.d.).

that the pandemic left significant learning losses in elementary school (6th grade) and high school (3rd year of high school) students, with a substantial drop in the scores achieved for the 2020–2021 school year. A loss of –42 points was observed in the “languages and communication” test and –34 points in “mathematics” in the Planea–Ibero (2021) applications concerning Planea–INEE (2017–2018). The most significant loss was recorded at the upper secondary level, with a reduction of –72 and –51 percentage points between the Planea–INEE and Planea–Ibero applications for the subjects above (Medina and Martínez, 2022).

Even though there is evidence of the loss of student learning during the closing of schools, no measures were taken to contain such losses, which will generate a greater educational backwardness. In the report that the Superior Audit Office of the Federation (ASF) conducted on the performance of the National Strategy for the Safe Return to Basic Education Schools, there was a decrease in learning levels for 2021–2022⁴². The school cycle was somehow cor-

⁴² In Reading, students showed a reduction in learning of 20.9 percentage points, going from 70.6% in second grade to 49.7% in sixth grade; while in Mathematics it decreased by 16.7 percentage points, going from 66.5% correct in second grade to 49.8% in sixth grade. The results show that the



Image: "Learning poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean" at <https://observatorio.tec.mx/edu-news/pobreza-del-aprendizaje-en-latam-alc/>

roborated. In addition, in the report, the ASF pointed out that the SEP did not accredit that a diagnosis of the infrastructure conditions in basic education schools for a safe return had been carried out. However, there was no systematic and public exercise in

greatest decrease in learning was in the fifth grade of this educational level (ASF, 2022).

learning assessment by the educational authorities, generating even more significant concern since the learning lag is not corrected naturally if the authorities do not take the necessary measures to reverse it (Medina and Martinez, 2022).

DEEPENING OF GAPS

Another of the major effects derived from the management of the educational system includes the widening of gender gaps in education. We have found that in our country, in the first school years, there seems to be a positive balance in terms of schooling in Mexico; as women grow older, girls and young women stop studying, which allows the opening of substantial educational gender gaps (Vital Signos Vitales, 2022d). According to the Census (2020), out of every 100 women, six do not have a school degree, while four out of every 100 men do not (INEGI, 2020). Although there is no substantial difference between men and women at the beginning of school life, after age 50, the gap between the two marks a significant disparity, where women are the most affected by not obtaining any school degree (Signos Vitales, 2021b).

Educational gaps are also present in indigenous peoples and communities. The illiteracy rate affects more women (35.6%) than men (17.8%), and the context is even more alarming, as there is a risk that girls will drop out of school at around 10 and 11 years of age. This is the age at which they would have to enter secondary school, so the schooling of girls under 15 who speak an indigenous language barely reaches 5.8 grades, while boys achieve higher levels of education (6.7 school grades) (INEGI, 2020). There are even notable differences among women who do not speak an indigenous language, with up to 4.1 more school grades than those who do (INEGI, 2020). According to statistical evidence, in Mexico, unfortunately, we could be taking regressive steps due to the inadequate targeting of resources, the disarticulation of the National Education System, the change in educational plans and programs, the lack of attention to teachers, the loss of learning and thus, the widening of educational gaps.

SCHOOL DROPOUT

Even though the New Mexican School (NEM for its acronym in Spanish) project incorporates in its model the historically neglected populations under the components of inclusion, equity, gender perspective, and excellence, educational deficiencies, and learning loss continue and increase exponentially with time. Recent changes in the educational system still do not support the most vulnerable and continue without solving the problem of school dropout, which is why there is a historical reduction in school enrollment by educational level.

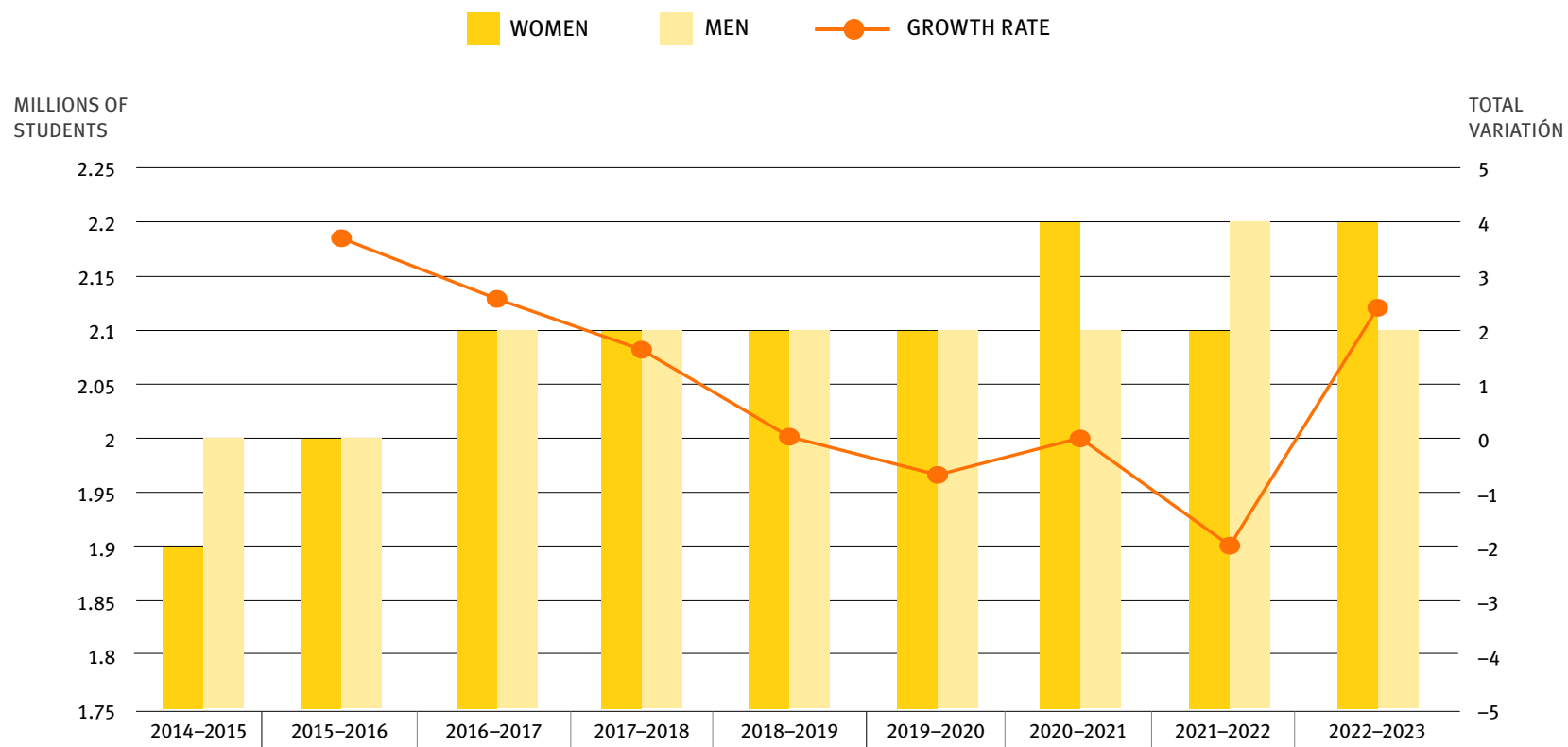
In 2021, the Superior Audit Office of the Federation (ASF) reported that after 16 months of distance classes, of the 23.9 million students registered in basic education schools at the beginning of the school year, only 53.3% returned to classes (12.7 million). One out of every two students who returned to classes (55%) did so to schools that did not have sanitary conditions and sanitary infrastructure (ASF, 2022).

After the closing of schools, more than half a million students stopped attending, and the most significant decrease in school enrollment was presented by the preschool level, which decreased by 13%, followed by upper secondary education (7%), primary (4%),

secondary (3%) and higher education (1%) (Fernandez *et al.*, 2022). Unfortunately, in the case of higher education, the panorama is no better, as shown by the public protests of medical students of the Welfare Universities due to the lack of campuses, lack of teachers and classes, and even deficiencies in materials (Reforma, 2022), even though these institutions are governed under the criterion of “offering free and quality higher education services.” The graduates of the Welfare Universities face a legal battle when they receive from the educational authorities degrees that are not valid since they do not have the requirements to obtain their professional credentials (Uresti, 2022).

In the particular case of Higher Secondary Education (EMS), the authorities have recorded a 2.5% drop in enrollment in higher secondary education and a 0.5% drop in higher education for the third consecutive year. This situation affects men (–3.8% in upper secondary and –4.1% in higher education) more than women (–1.2% in upper secondary) (Fernández *et al.*, 2022). Although the main reason for dropping school enrollment was closing schools, there is evidence that this phenomenon has been foreseeable for some time. As can be seen in Graph 20, starting in the 2019–2020 cycle, the drop in EMS enrollment deepened, affecting males to a greater extent.

**GRAPH 20. GROWTH RATE AND NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SECONDARY EDUCATION (EMS)
BY SCHOOL CYCLE AND GENDER**



Note: The left axis refers to the millions of students enrolled in EMS by gender, and the right axis refers to the total variation.

Source: In-house elaboration with data from SEP (n.d.).

◀ Youth and Opportunities

With data from the Census (2020), we know that there are currently 21.9 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24, equivalent to 17% of the total population (INEGI, 2020). The main obstacles young people face include dropping out of school, the threat of the growth of mental illnesses, the insecurity experienced in the country, access to digital media, and unemployment in working life (Table 11).

Currently, the population between 15 and 24 years of age has increased its level of schooling compared to previous generations. Six out of every ten young people finished high school, while only four out of every ten people between 40 and 49 did so. While in 2005, only 11% (2.2 million people) completed a bachelor's degree, in 2022, this percentage increased to 18% (4.1 million people). Regarding employment, six out of ten young people do not participate in the labor market. Of these, 83% are not available given their school ages. However, of those seeking to participate in the economy (EAP), two out of ten do not seek employment because they believe they have no chance of finding a job or of finding one of poor quality (INEGI, n.d.3).

In Mexico, although the young population is more educated when entering the labor market, they face conditions that could affect their professional career since social security or other labor benefits are not guaranteed. Acción Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza (s.f) has made this phenomenon visible, where 72% of young people (15 to 29 years old) have a job without sufficient income (equivalent to the cost of 2 basic food baskets). In addition, 61% of young people in the same age group do not have social security, violating current labor rights. The importance of the first job can be fundamental as an accumulator of human capital since, in addition to indicating the level of skills that individuals possess, it eventually affects the ability to migrate or move up to better job opportunities. It should be considered that an unfavorable start in the labor market could have persistent implications throughout the individual's career (Llamosas and Rangel, 2019).

The conditions of entry to the labor market and to a specific social class have a considerable influence on people's occupational careers, where mobility towards a different and higher class than the origin is an event that happens to very few people in the current labor market (one out of every three men and one out of every four women). Thus, the first job (oc-

TABLE 11. PROBLEMS FACED BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN TODAY'S MEXICO

OBSTACLE	DESCRIPTION
Unemployment	While the economy generates 1.3 million jobs per year at most, the potential population aged 15–29 will grow by 3.6 million people per year between 2025 and 2035 (Rodriguez and Foncerrada, 2022).
School dropout	The enrollment reduction has been 366,954 students aged 15 to 17 years who since 2019 did not enroll in high school. Also, 8% of young people who finish high school do not enter high school (Fernandez <i>et al.</i> , 2022).
Access to digital media	During the peak of the pandemic in 2020, only 53% of 15-year-old students attending school (62% of 15-year-olds) had a computer, and 68% had access to the Internet (ITU, 2019).
Mental illnesses	In 2022, 42.2% of young people aged 15–24 presented severe anxiety problems, while 31.1% presented severe depression in Mexico (VoCes–19, 2022).
Insecurity	The most alarming indicator is that of intentional homicides, which primarily affect youth and young adults (those between 20 and 35 years of age). The negative impact this has on the country's future is difficult to calculate (Vital Signs, 2022d).

Source: In-house elaboration with data from Signos Vitales (2022d), Rodriguez & Foncerrada, ITU (2019) and VoCes–19 (2022).

curing at an early age in Mexico) is a kind of social inheritance of workers that conditions and crystallizes future employment possibilities, opportunities for

social welfare, and the accumulation of social advantages or disadvantages throughout the life course (Mancini, 2019).

Reflections on school difficulties

According to experts and experts in education, there is great concern in Mexico about the direction this sector is taking, mainly regarding the effect of its current policies and the short, medium, and long-term consequences. Based on analyses and studies from previous years, in addition to those currently being prepared, the educational panorama in Mexico appears to be critical and difficult to reverse in the short term.

Researcher Sylvia Schmelkes⁴³ has monitored the educational process since 1970 and has presented timely evidence on the evolution of education in Mexico. Derived from her last contribution, we underline the importance of the current context through which the entire educational system is going through. In this sense, we emphasize that we are still in a context where there is diversity and inequality in schools, which implies that there are still schools in areas with rural and urban poverty where there is not only poverty in terms of infrastructure or equipment but also in school functioning and pedagogical practices (Schmelkes, 2023). On the other hand, one of the many explanations for educational inequity has

⁴³ Sociologist, Researcher and specialist in Education.



Image: Educational inequity at <https://tvurbananoticias.com.mx/2019/10/09/gobierno-de-edomex-trabaja-para-elevar-la-calidad-educativa-de-mas-de-4-7-millones-de-estudiantes/>; <https://www.lajornadadeoriente.com.mx/puebla/reforma-educativa-educacion-rural-mexico/>

to do with the capacity of educational communities to adapt to their context, link with the community, and improve their school organization and academic leadership without forgetting teachers' pedagogical practices.

The pending issues are accumulating in terms of learning. Eduardo Backhoff⁴⁴ (2023) has also made his concern and constant vigilance to the educational course visible. The most recurrent ones refer to the loss of reading skills (learning); the political and educational crisis marked by a confused ideology and pedagogy, with premises that are not based on scientific evidence or successful practices in other coun-

⁴⁴ Researcher, President of Métrica Educativa.

tries, and rather obey a logic that is improvised and unconcerned about the actual course of education (Backhoff, 2023), according to Marco Fernandez.⁴⁵ The educational crisis we are currently experiencing in the country will imply deficiencies in student learning. The worst thing is that the educational authorities are not implementing any strategy to recover learning loss. Mathematical thinking, analytical skills, and data processing are fundamental in the working world (Cabadas, 2023), which are now at risk, making social mobility and the country's development impossible.

We are still in a context where there is diversity and inequality in schools. There is not only poverty in terms of infrastructure or equipment but also in school functioning and pedagogical practices.

Schmelkes, 2023

The most recurrent concerns on educational issues refer to the loss of reading skills, the political and educational crisis marked by a confused ideology and pedagogy, with premises that are not based on scientific evidence or successful practices, and rather obey a logic that is improvised and unconcerned about the actual course of education.

Backhoff, 2023



⁴⁵Coordinator in Anticorruption and Education at México Evalúa.



Image: <https://iluminet.com/tag/laboratorio-pruebas/>

INSTITUTIONAL DISMANTLING OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

INSTITUTIONAL DISMANTLING of Science, Technology & Innovation

Centralization and illegality in Science

Last May⁴⁶ the decree issuing the Law on Humanities, Science, Technology, and Innovation (LMHCTI) was published in the Official Journal of the Federation (DOF) (Chamber of Deputies, 2023). The law's approval introduced significant changes in the national system that have generated concern among experts. It is worth mentioning that this sector has been a permanent target of attacks and discrediting by the federal government. Since the beginning of the current administration, attempts have been made

⁴⁶ May 8, 2023.

to destroy everything that has been previously built despite the decisive role of scientific advances in the progress of societies (Signos Vitales, 2022d).

The approval of the LMHCTI (with 48 votes in favor and 12 against) has meant one of the most drastic changes as it refers to the centralization of scientific decision-making. It has been one of the most opaque and irregular processes since this law should have been debated with the scientific community under seven open parliaments. Unfortunately, it was approved with only two open parliament meetings, passing through the Chamber of Deputies on Wednesday, April 26, approved in the Senate on April

29, and finally published in the DOF on May 8, 2023. Given the unconstitutional actions, on July 6, 2023, a provisional suspension was granted against the new law⁴⁷. (LMHCTI). It was not until August 15 that the definitive suspension was granted (Toche, 2023). Although this suspension does not end the lawsuit, it does suspend the processes the authorities have been carrying out to allocate the new law. This means that the Conahcyt would not have to stop its work, but the content of the effect of the Law should be inapplicable, which favors higher education institutions since it meant the disappearance of support for hundreds of postgraduate programs (Toche, 2023).

The actions prior to the approval of the new law by the government had shown a generalized deterioration in the state of science, with the dismantling of the representation and coordination structure based on complementary spaces: the Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum (FCCyT for its acronym in Spanish) and the National Conference of Science, Technology and Innovation, which operated without

⁴⁷ The measure protects the work of Conahcyt, i.e., it does not paralyze it. On the other hand, it should protect the guild from the attacks that the Law has begun to demonstrate, such as the recent case of the modifications to the National Postgraduate System, which today has higher education institutions on alert (Toche, 2023)

interruption until 2019, when they began to be weakened with the elimination of resources, as they hindered a much more vertical decision making (Puga and Valderrama, 2023). Among the effects of the new law are the dismantling of Conacyt (now Conahcyt), the centralization of decision-making, the narrowing of scientific research to national priorities, the reduction of academic freedom, and the denial of progress and innovation.



Image: Congress approves reforms on 26 April 2023 at <https://elpais.com/mexico/2023-04-27/el-congreso-mexicano-discute-una-lluvia-de-reformas-ante-el-cierre-del-periodo-de-sesiones.html>

Centralization and effects of the LMHCTI



The new LMHCTI marked the centralization of STI decision-making by ceding absolute decision-making capacity to a council made up exclusively of officials from the Executive Branch. In other words, it proposes a hierarchical organization with no room for plurality since the science organizations of the federal entities and researchers are left out. In the new Law (LMHCTI), the direction that scientific research will take is limited to the interests of whoever the President designates, including in the new composition of the Governing Board the Secretary of National Defense and the Secretary of the Navy, which gives a sign of the bias that the new scientific agenda could cause, limiting the areas of research and limiting resources only for specific projects. These changes in the Governing Board of the National Council of Humanities, Sciences, and Technologies (Conahcyt), formerly Conacyt, are explained in Table 12.

As if that were not enough, researchers and experts in the scientific sector are left out since the LMHCTI limits their participation, and although they may issue proposals, these have no weight. At least, this is what is established in Article 68 of the LMHCTI:

Public servants, academics, humanists, scientists, technologists, innovators and, in general, anyone who, due to their knowledge and experience, may contribute to the deliberation of matters within the competence of the Governing Board, may be invited to the sessions of the Governing Board with voice, but without a vote. Likewise, a representative of the National Human Rights Commission will be invited to participate with voice, but without vote, in the sessions of the Board of Governors.

Chamber of Deputies, 2023

The new law also affects the Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum since, although the law does not make it explicit, it disappears and puts at risk the board of directors composed of associations and organizations that made it possible to formulate proposals on policies and programs for scientific research, development, and innovation. Another effect of the LMHCTI refers to the orientation of public resources to support science since there is no mention of the goal or objective of reaching at least 1% of spending on STI, as established in Article 9. Bis of the previous Law (Science and Technology Law) where: “The annual amount that the State, Federation, federal entities and municipalities allocate to

TABLE 12. CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE CONAHCYT GOVERNING BOARD SINCE THE LMHCTI

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY LAW (LAST AMENDED 11-05-2022) ARTICLE 5	LGMHCTI (ARTICLE 68)
REPRESENTATIVES	
The President of the Republic	Head of the General Directorate
Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
Head of the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit	Welfare Secretariat
Head of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources	Ministry of Infrastructure, Communications and Transportation
Head of the Ministry of Energy	Secretary of Culture
Head of the Ministry of Economy	Ministry of Economy
Head of the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development	Ministry of Public Education
Minister of Infrastructure, Communications and Transportation	Ministry of Energy
Head of the Ministry of Public Education	Ministry of Finance and Public Credit
Head of the Ministry of Health	Secretary of National Defense
The person occupying the General Directorate of CONACyT, in his capacity as Executive Secretary of the General Council itself.	Secretary of the Navy
The General Coordinator of the Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
The person in charge of the Presidency of the Mexican Academy of Sciences	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
A representative of the National Conference on Science and Technology.	Secretary of Health
Three representatives of the productive sector with national coverage and representativeness will be appointed by the President of the Republic at the proposal of the Ministry of Economy and will be renewed every three years.	National Institute of Indigenous Peoples
A representative of the System of Public Research Centers	The head of the Governing Board proposed eight representatives of the community and of the social and private sectors, with one alternate (with voice and vote).
The person in charge of the General Executive Secretariat of the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior)	

Source: In-house elaboration with information from the LGC (2022) and the LMHCTI Chamber of Deputies (2023).

scientific research and technological development activities must be such that national spending in this area cannot be less than 1% of the country's gross domestic product through the support, mechanisms and instruments provided for in this Law" (Chamber of Deputies, 2002).

Although a deficit in Science, Innovation, and Technology (STI) prevailed in Mexico compared to other countries (World Bank, n.d.2), international recommendations on national spending of 1% as a proportion of GDP for the sector were included in the previous Law. Mexico has never reached this percentage, as only 0.3% of GDP was allocated to the sector until 2020 (Graph 21). Although the amount allocated to the National Council for Science Technology and Innovation (Conacyt now Conahcyt) allowed for stable resources that represented an average of 18% of its total spending (Puga and Valderrama, 2022), they were gradually decreasing since 2018 with the arrival of this government (Graph 22).

Even the budget allocated in 2023 is reduced by three-quarters of what it was at the beginning of the six-year term, resulting in reductions in the number of projects that received funding. According to the fourth government report, fewer projects were fund-

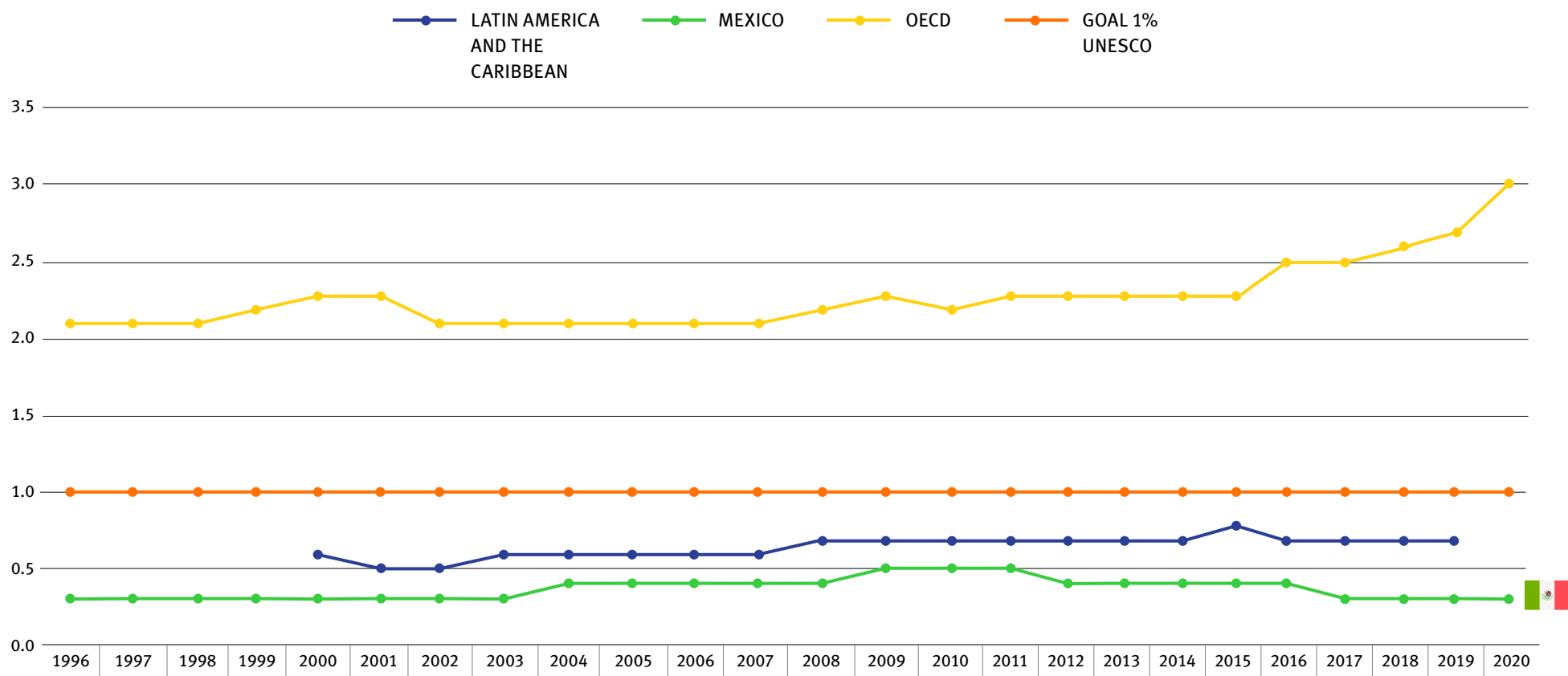
ed in 2021 than in 2017 (108 vs. 2,700, respectively), demonstrating the Mexican government's lack of priority given to scientific development. Likewise, a reduction in study abroad grants was presented from 7,514 in 2015 to 2,087 in 2021 (Conacyt, n.d.1).

There has also been a decrease in the number of postgraduate scholarships and Conacyt quality support, as well as in the budget since the beginning of the administration (Graph 23).

The disarticulation of the scientific apparatus and the new administrative modifications also compromise innovation in the country. Since 2018, the percentage allocated to the Innovation Stimulus Program (PEI) aimed at private companies has drastically decreased until disappearing, going from 13% of the total budgeted in 2013 to 1% in 2019, when the program stopped its operation. The objective of the Program was to promote scientific and technological education through the generation of Research and Technological Development projects by companies linked to research centers with the public, social, and private sectors (Conacyt, n.d.2).

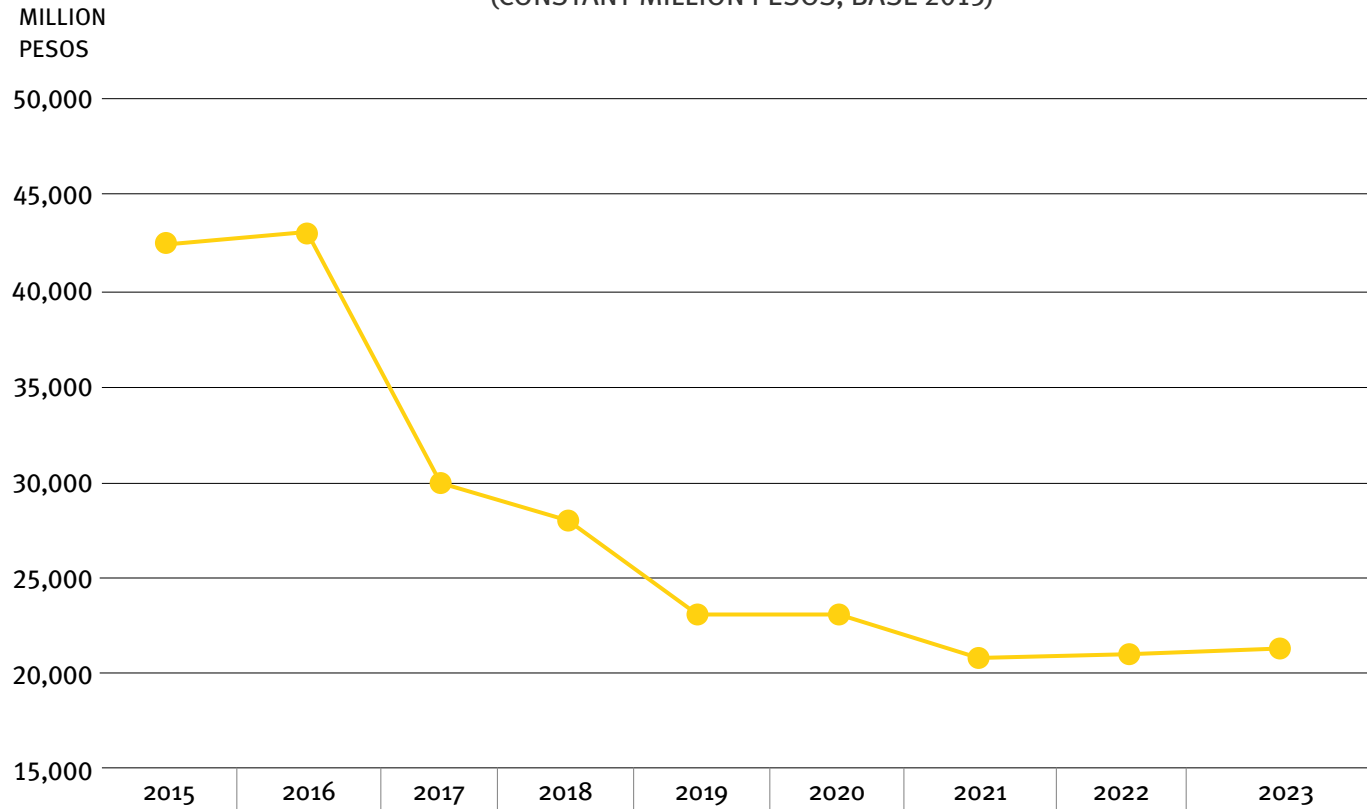
In short, the changes have been implemented through administrative acts, many of which are not

GRAPH 21. COMPARISON OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SPENDING IN MEXICO, COMPARED TO LATIN AMERICA AND OECD
(% OF GNP AND AVAILABLE YEARS)



Source: In-house elaboration with data from the World Bank (n.d.2).

GRAPH 22. CONACYT'S ANNUAL BUDGET
(CONSTANT MILLION PESOS, BASE 2015)



Source: In-house elaboration with data from Rojas (n.d.).

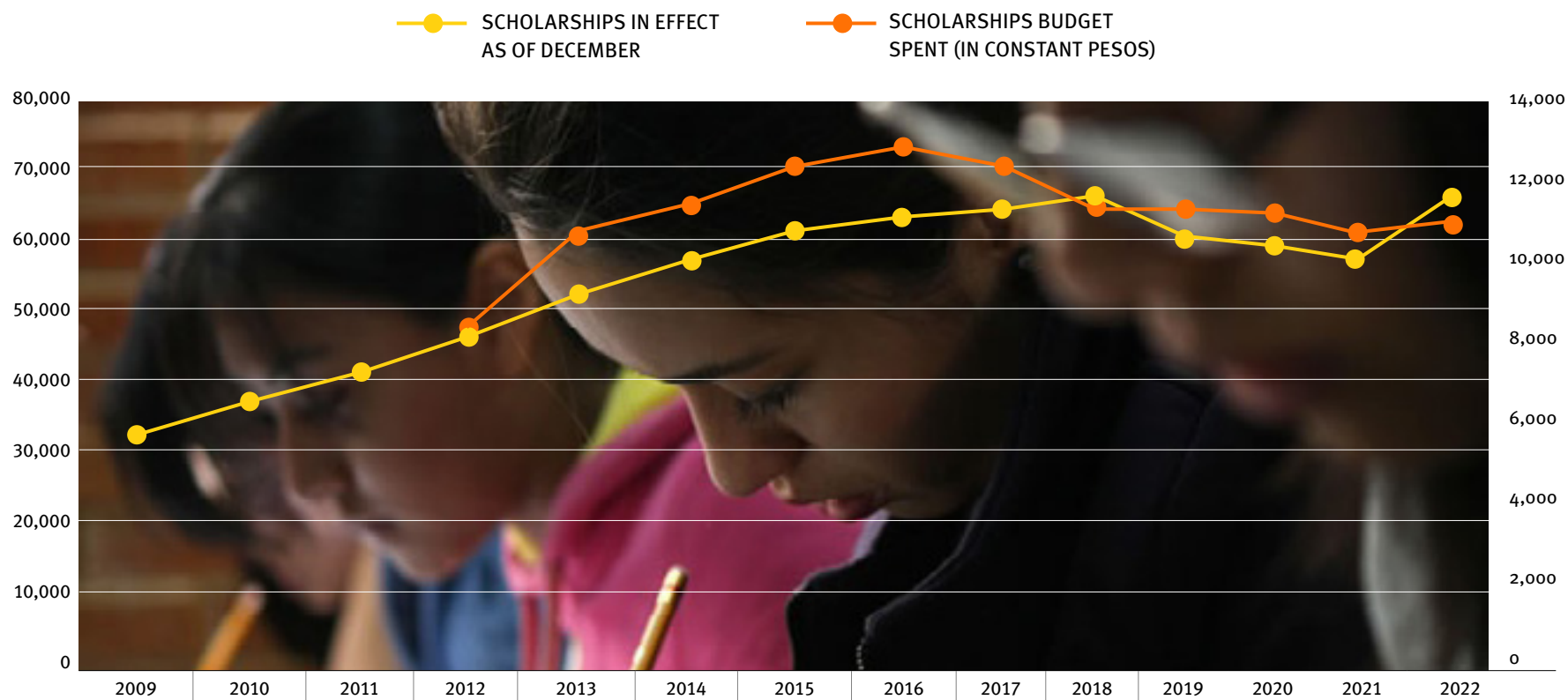
ACCORDING TO THE FOURTH GOVERNMENT REPORT LÓPEZ OBRADOR INFORMED:

IN 2017, 2,700 RESEARCH PROJECTS WERE FUNDED; IN 2021 WERE FINANCED 108.

SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDY ABROAD WERE REDUCED FROM 7,514 IN 2015 TO 2,087 IN 2021.

DEMONSTRATES THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT'S LACK OF PRIORITY IN SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT.

GRAPH 23. GRANTS IN EFFECT AS OF DECEMBER OF EACH YEAR AND ANNUAL BUDGET EXERCISED
(CONSTANT PESOS AS OF 2022)



Source: In-house elaboration with data from Conacyt (n.d.2). Image: <https://www.dcubanos.com/blog/estudiar-en-mexico-becas-para-nacionales/>

only illegal but also unconstitutional and discriminatory, leaving researchers from private universities out of the National Innovation Program and withdrawing economic incentives from the National System of Researchers (SNI for its acronym in Spanish). These acts put an end to the scientific and technological convergence with the private initiative that operated through the Research Stimulus Programs, which breaks the link between the scientific community and universities and private companies, something vital for the development of applied science and cutting-edge technology. All this directly limits the capabilities of scientists in the social, environmental, political, educational, and health fields.

The changes performed by Conacyt have been implemented through administrative acts, many of which are not only illegal but also unconstitutional and discriminatory.

Conclusions

Although the conditions before 2018 were far from perfect, they satisfied the generally accepted principles of academic freedom, peer review, autonomous consultation bodies, and allocation of resources by public call under the criteria of transparency, quality, and relevance. The reversal as of 2018 includes unilateral practices imposed by Conacyt (Conahcyt) management, thus limiting the sector's capacity, as they weaken the scientific system and contribute to disconnecting research centers from universities and the productive sector. These acts jeopardize past achievements, limit young people's incorporation into academia, threaten access to the benefits of Science, Technology, and Research, and hinder the dissemination of knowledge, especially among children and young people.





Image: Photo: Seila Montes en https://elpais.com/sociedad/2020/02/10/actualidad/1581295136_012381.html

THE DEEPEST GAP: ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

THE DEEPEST GAP: access to health services

The health crisis caused by a new virus (SARS-CoV-2) drastically changed the way and style of managing health services worldwide. The components the pandemic has universally impacted can be seen in almost all areas of human life. These include the visible deterioration of health institutions, public health deficiencies, limitations in the dynamics of social coexistence, and limited economic growth, among others. More than three years after the beginning of the great encirclement and with an enormous number of deficiencies in infrastructure, medical equipment, and insufficient human resources under poor working conditions and a weakened health system, Mexico has had to face the worst institutional, health, economic, educational and poverty increase

crisis in its history. The effect of the pandemic in Mexico, together with the institutional disarray, dismantling, and destruction, revealed a whole set of restrictions and shortcomings, which, in sum, have created a scenario where the health of all Mexicans is especially vulnerable and compromised. In fact, between January 2020 and September 2022, Mexico registered an excess of 793,265 deaths, more than what was recorded in the period 2015–2019⁴⁸, which dramatically summarizes the result of the pandemic and its dismal management during this government (INEGI, 2023b).

⁴⁸Figure according to the “endemic channels” methodology. The estimated excess deaths based on the “quasi-Poisson model” was 689,581 deaths.

Even though the State should be the main guarantor of citizens' safety, health, patrimony, and well-being, the behavior and management of the federal government and many state governments have been lamentable in the scenarios before, during, and after the most significant health crisis in modern Mexico. With practically one year to go before the end of the current federal administration, the management of health authorities in Mexico continues to be confused, uncoordinated, and far from uniting the country; the polarization between federal and state health officials has been accentuated. The effects of this unfortunate panorama show a sectorial neglect that undermines and hurts the credibility of the institution and its leading official spokespersons.

The promises made during the presidential campaign and as a government are still pending on the public agenda. The fact is that the advances in health made for decades and the excellent health coverage have regressed alarmingly. Likewise, the absences and deficiencies in hundreds of treatments, the insufficient coverage of care and vaccination, the precarious working conditions of health personnel, and the management of the health sector in this administration have resulted in the lack of quality in public health services. This fact evidences the place given to the health sector within the current government and, at the same time, violates social rights, evidently affecting the quality of life of Mexicans.



Images: Hospitals in Mexico at: <https://www.informador.mx/Mexico/Mexico-tiene-una-cama-de-hospital-por-cada-mil-habitantes-20150724-0086.html>;
<https://www.jornada.com.mx/2013/02/24/estados/032n1est>

Health systems capacity in comparative perspective

There have already been several efforts to make visible the lack of access to health services in Mexico (Signos Vitales, 2021a, 2022a, and 2022d). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are three main objectives on which national health systems should focus: a) to improve the health of the population, b) to offer adequate treatment to health services, and 3) to guarantee financial security in health (WHO, n.d.). In the Mexican case, the Ministry of Health is the institution responsible for meeting these mandates, and to date, it is far from being able to achieve them. It has not been able to reduce these inequalities through criteria of efficiency, equity, and transparency, nor has it been able to improve the care and health of the population in the most precarious social conditions.

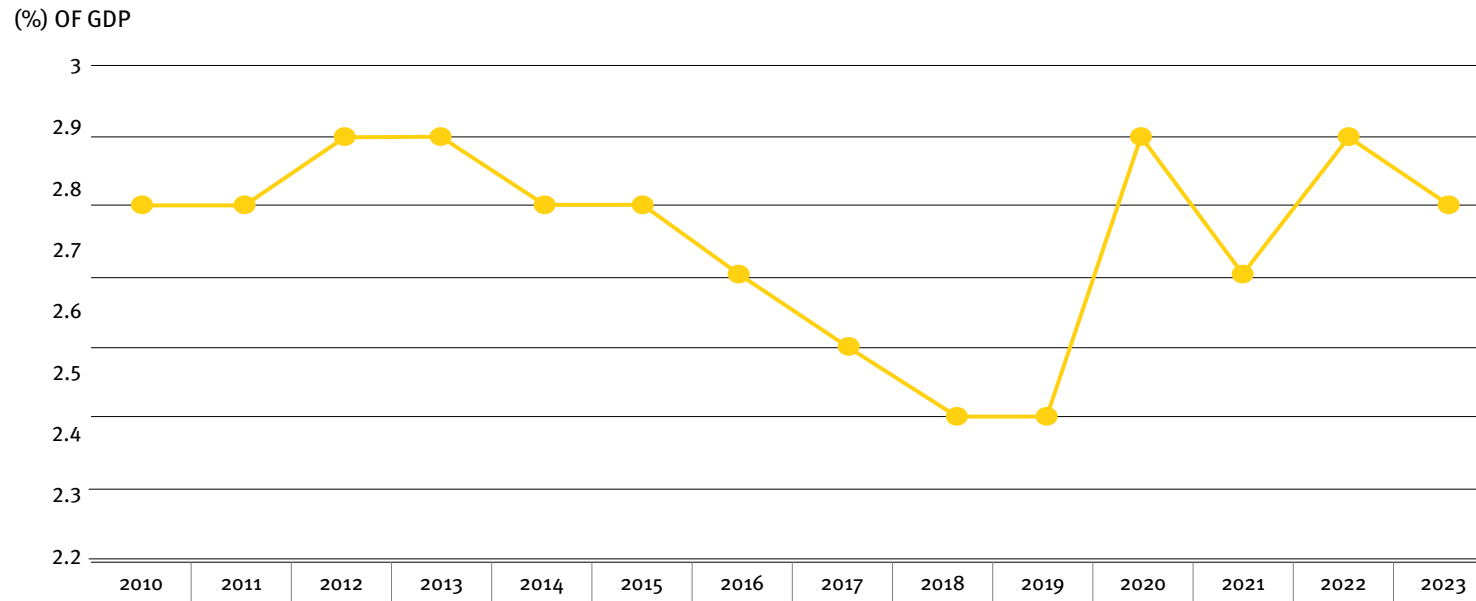
Certain elements together reflect the capacity of health systems around the world. According to the OECD (2021), some indicators of such capacity in health systems have been identified among its member countries: a) health expenditure per person, which summarizes the overall availability of resources, b) the number of doctors and nurses, which

provides more information on the supply of health workers and c) the number of hospital beds are an indicator of acute care capacity (OECD, 2021). Furthermore, although more resources do not automatically translate into better health outcomes, they define the capabilities of health systems worldwide to some extent.

Regarding budget, the public amount for health in Mexico has been insufficient to respond to the growing demand for health services (CIEP, 2018). Prior to the pandemic, the World Health Organization suggested that countries allocate 6% of GDP to their public health system (PAHO, 2018). However, between 2010 and 2022, Mexico has only allocated 2.5 and 2.9% of its annual GDP, less than half of what the WHO suggested (Graph 24).

Health in the Mexican context is attached to public spending within this item or sector. From 2016 to 2019, public spending on health had a downward trend, accumulating cuts of 42,263 million pesos. In fact, in 2019, the year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the lowest budget of the last decade was presented with 684,938 million pesos, which meant a reduction of 3.6% in real terms concerning 2016 (CIEP, Oxfam, FUNDAR, 2021). By 2020, public spending on health

GRAPH 24. PUBLIC HEALTH SPENDING AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP
2010–2023



Source: In-house elaboration with data from CIEP (2022).

amounted to 748,746 billion pesos, which represented 23,813 billion pesos more than the approved amount. In other words, an increase of 0.094 points in GDP was realized. However, health care during the pandemic required at least an increase of 0.94 points of GDP, i.e., ten times more than the additional spending (CIEP, Oxfam, FUNDAR, 2021).

Greater allocation of financial resources for health and more and better health for the same money is

the best way to have a resilient health system (OECD, 2021). However, in terms of public spending per person, in 2022, Mexico was among the top five countries with the lowest health spending per capita, with an average of 626 dollars per person, 2.6 times less than that reported in Chile for the same year (1,679 dollars) and up to five times less than that reported in Spain (3,142), which considerably limits the attention to individual health needs and the population as a whole.

The experience during and after the pandemic indicates that not only economic resources strengthen the capacities of health systems. Human resources are a unique, valuable, specialized, and transcendental element for a quality service in the health sector since it is the best indicator of intersectoral collaboration and the only component to provide an immediate response to crises or health collapses. In Mexico, the number of nurses who respond to and care for patients in hospitals is 2.8 nurses per 1,000 people, lower than the average reported by OECD member countries (10.6 nurses). It is even lower than the average reported by Latin American and Caribbean countries, 3.6 nurses (OECD and World Bank, 2023) (Graph 25).

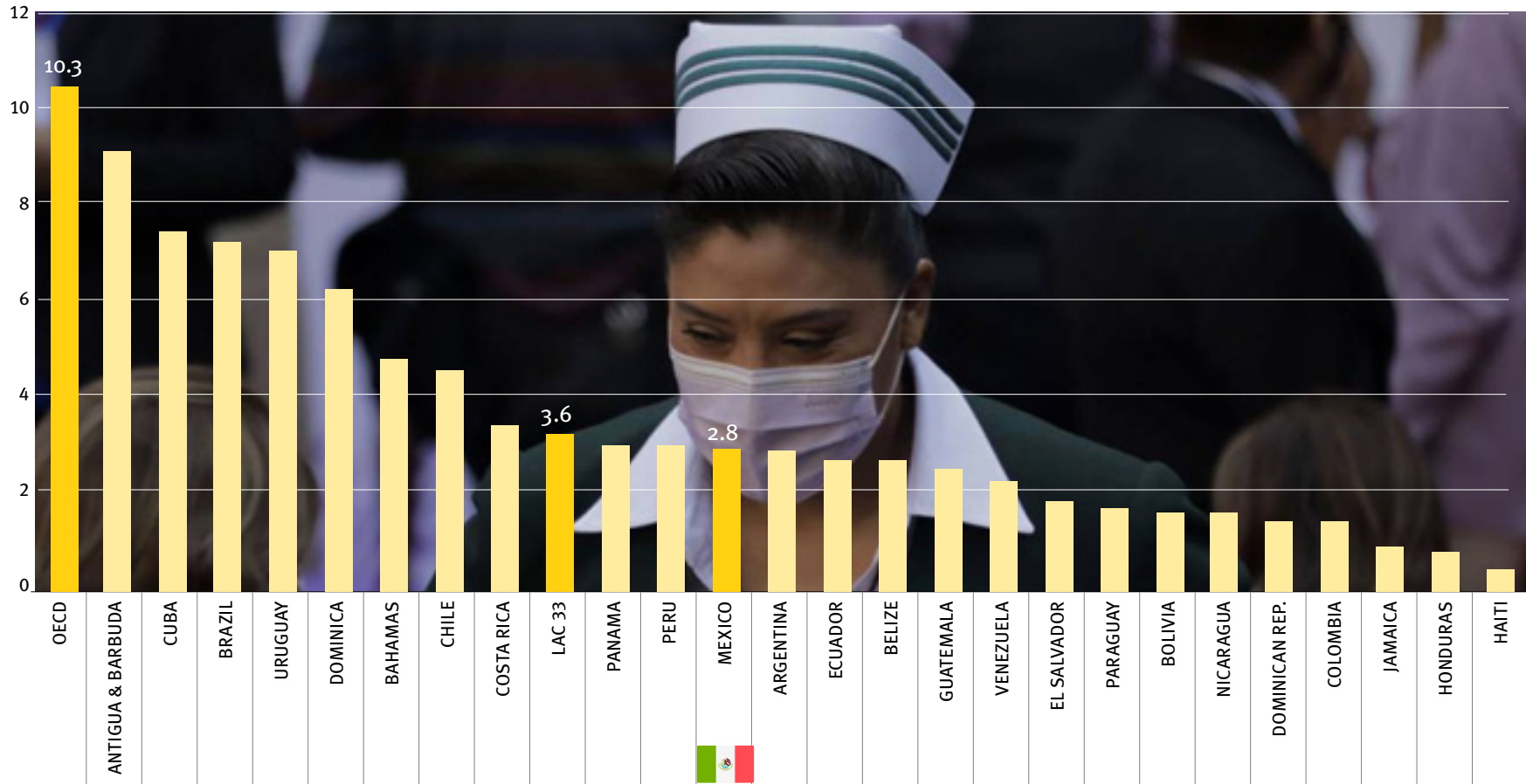
In terms of the number of physicians operating in the health system, a wide variation (including all general practitioners and medical specialties) was observed throughout the LAC region. Cuba reported the highest data, with approximately 8.4 physicians per 1,000 people. Haiti had the lowest rate of physicians, with 0.2 physicians per 1,000 people, while Mexico reported 2.4 physicians per 1,000 people; a figure well below that reported by the OECD (3.5) but above the average for the 33 countries that make up Latin America and the Caribbean (2.02) (Graph 26).

Regarding the aging characteristics of the medical staff for the OECD countries, approximately 21% of physicians are between 55 and 64 years of age, and Mexico scored the highest, with just over 22% of the total physicians in that age range. In the proportion of physicians aged 65 years or older, Chile has a higher proportion of older physicians at 13% compared to the OECD average (12%). In contrast, Colombia and Mexico reported a smaller rate of physicians in this age range, with rates of just under 5% and over 3%, respectively (OECD and World Bank, 2023).

About medical specialists and mental health professionals, our country also has rates below the average of OECD and Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries. Table 11 shows that while OECD countries reported an average of 40 psychologists per 100,000 inhabitants, LAC countries reported an average of 23.9 psychologists per 100,000 inhabitants. This measure was surpassed by Argentina (286), Costa Rica (135) and Colombia (128) (OECD and World Bank, 2023). Mexico reported only 5.9 psychologists per 100,000 people.

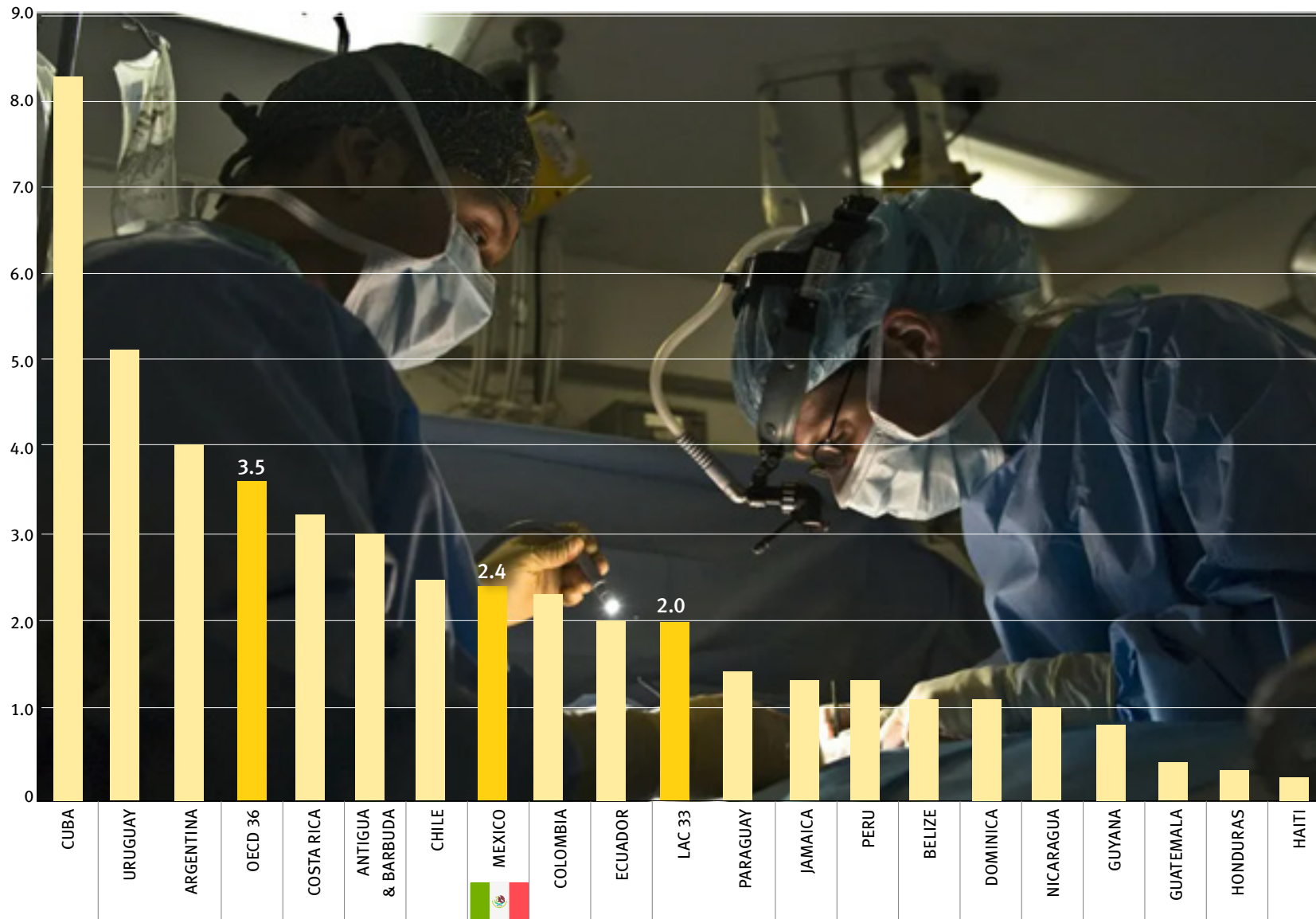
Regarding the number of psychiatrists per 100,000 inhabitants, OECD member countries reported an average of 18.1 psychiatrists per 100,000. The LAC region

GRAPH 25. NUMBER OF NURSES PER 1,000 PERSONS



Source: In-house elaboration with data from OECE (2022). Image: https://wradio.com.mx/radio/2022/05/12/nacional/1652382366_757304.html

GRAPH 26. NUMBER OF DOCTORS PER 1,000 PERSONS
(LATEST AVAILABLE YEAR)



Source: In-house elaboration with data from OECD and World Bank (2023). Image: Pixabay at <https://www.sopitas.com/noticias/ocho-medicos-cirujanos-generales-por-cada-100-mil-habitantes-mexico/>

reported an average of 3.4, while Mexico was well below both averages (1.6 per 100,000) (Table 13).

Consequently, we have less capacity for diagnosing, caring for, and following mental illnesses, which affects healthy lives. This sector has been enormously helped after the pandemic, and in Mexico, its contribution and promotion have been minimized to support millions of Mexicans who had to adapt to the new ways and lifestyles after the great confinement without the necessary support.

Between March and April 2020, recorded levels of anxiety and depression in the general population were higher in almost all OECD countries compared

to previous years (OECD, 2021). Moreover, young people’s mental health was also particularly affected during the pandemic, with a dramatic increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms, especially in late 2020 and early 2021 (WHO, 2022). In 2022, in Mexico, 42.2% of young people aged 15–24 presented severe anxiety problems, while 31.1% reported severe depression (VoCes–19, 2022).

Finally, in most countries, hospitals account for the largest share of total fixed investment, and hospital beds provide an indicator of the resources available to provide hospital services.⁴⁹ The number of hospi-

⁴⁹ The influence of the supply of hospital beds on admission rates has been extensively documented, confirming that a

TABLE 13. NUMBER OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PSYCHIATRISTS PER 100,000 INHABITANTS

COUNTRY	PSYCHOLOGISTS	COUNTRY	PSYCHIATRISTS
Argentina	286.3	Uruguay	15.7
Costa Rica	135.3	Argentina	14.5
Colombia	128.3	Cuba	8.8
OECD (average)	40	OECD (average)	18.1
LAC (average)	23.9	LAC (average)	3.4
Mexico	5.9	Mexico	1.6

Source: In-house elaboration with data from OECD and World Bank (2023).

tal beds in LAC is 2.1 per 1,000 people, lower than the OECD average (4.3). Among member countries, it varies considerably: more than five beds per 1,000 population are available in Barbados, Cuba, and Argentina, while countries with 1 bed or less per 1,000 population include Guatemala (0.60), Haiti (0.70), Honduras (0.70), Venezuela (0.80), Nicaragua (0.90) and Mexico (0.99). These significant disparities reflect substantial differences in the resources invested in hospital infrastructure between countries.

The above again shows the shortcomings in different strategic components that serve to advance and improve the innumerable inadequacies and deprivations found in the health sector in Mexico. This analysis also serves to show how and through which public policy and budgetary tools and ways to begin to address this problem. Only by knowing the shortcomings and weaknesses of the health sector will we be in a better position to bring in new actors, other than the government, to bring about the urgent and necessary changes that the country requires.

greater supply generally leads to a higher number of hospital admissions. Therefore, in addition to taking care of the quality of hospital care, it is important to use resources efficiently and ensure coordinated access to hospital care.



Image: "In Mexico there are 2.5 million young people in depression" at <https://asociacionpsicoanaliticamexicana.org/en-mexico-2-5-millones-de-jovenes-en-depresion/>

Historical Perspective

The dynamics of health conditions worldwide, analyzed from a historical context, show that the most significant changes in humanity have been made through changes in life expectancy⁵⁰. After World War II, international health experienced a breakthrough in new technologies developed during the years of military activity (engineering schemes, antibiotics, insecticides), which increased the hope of controlling some of the great ills of humankind and increasing the expected years of life (Newell, 1988). At the beginning of the 20th century, a person could expect to live up to 30 years. By the 1980s, life expectancy had doubled to more than 60 years. This explains an epidemiological transition, i.e., a demographic transition explained by scientific and technological advances that change the dynamics of the causes of death (Omran, 1971). The dimensions of this epidemiological transition are explained in Table 14 as a result of effects that have changed the dynamics of health worldwide.

Causes, age of death, and disease experience are the three trends of change patterns in epidemiological

⁵⁰ The level of life expectancy at birth (indicator of mortality in a population).

transitions: THE FIRST refers to the change in cause of death from one dominated by infectious diseases (disorders caused by organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites) to one dominated by non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases), although in times of pandemic, the patterns of change may be reversible. THE SECOND (age of death) refers to the fact that the vast majority of deaths were in children, i.e., the mortality pattern was dominated by infectious diseases in the younger population, the course of transition, the average age of death was moving towards advanced ages (biological limit of life or longevity). FINALLY, the experience of illness refers to the fact that during most of the human experience, being sick was a succession of acute episodes; nowadays, illness has become a condition of life, where people spend increasing periods in an imperfect state of health living in a chronic condition (INSP, 2022).

Fertility decline, risk factor changes, and case fatality rate improvements are part of the mechanisms. According to the model that emerged at the National Institute of Public Health, there are no fixed stages and overlaps between epidemiological transitions and possible “counter-transitions” in the direction

TABLE 14. DIMENSIONS OF EPIDEMIOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS

DIMENSIONS	EFFECT	EXPLANATION
Patterns of change	Change in the predominant cause of death:	Dramatic shift from a pattern dominated by infectious diseases to a pattern dominated by non-communicable diseases.
	Age at death	Changes in the age of mortality
	Transformation of the disease experience	It refers to moving from acute episodes to illness as a condition of life.
Mechanisms	Fertility decline	POPULATION BALANCE: FERTILITY TRANSITION, LOW BIRTH RATE, AND LOW MORTALITY.
	Changes in risk factors	Social, economic, and cultural transitions
	Improved case fatality rates	Technological advances affect case fatality rates (e.g., vaccines).
Models	Stages / Direction of change / Sequence of stages / Starting point and pace / Distribution among population groups	Epidemiological transition models.

Source: In-house elaboration with data from the National Institute of Public Health (INSP, 2017).

of change, qualitatively different experiences in the starting point and pace (INSP, 2017).

The institutional capacities with which Mexico's health system has been strengthened and reinforced have resulted from the sum of many efforts, decisions, and experiences of hundreds of specialists in the field. Until before this federal administration, al-

though the Mexican health system was not perfect, it did have elements that allowed it to have an adequate direction so that the needs and demands of the sector could be adequately addressed and resolved over time. Up to now, the sum of this effort, will, and determination has been diminished and disdained simply because it does not approve of the new governmental ideology.

◀ Government capabilities in health

The evolution of the Mexican Health System has faced several challenges since the second half of the 20th century, based on three generations of reforms (Frenk *et al.*, 2003). The first generation of reforms marked the history of the Mexican health system, which dates back to 1943 when three important health institutions were created: the Secretariat of Health, the Mexican Social Security Institute, and the Children's Hospital (the latter in charge of tertiary care, training of specialists and scientific research). At that stage, the health system did not reach many poor people in rural areas. In addition, between 1940 and 1970, radical changes were experienced in its epidemiological profile, which determined that this model soon reached the limit of its capacity to meet the population's needs (Frenk *et al.*, 2003).

A second generation of reforms was launched in the late 1970s. In 1983, the Health Law modified the Constitution and established the right of every person to health protection (article 4^o, 1983), creating state health systems to whom the responsibility for planning, organizing, and developing the system was conferred (Granda, 2008). Until then, the limited health

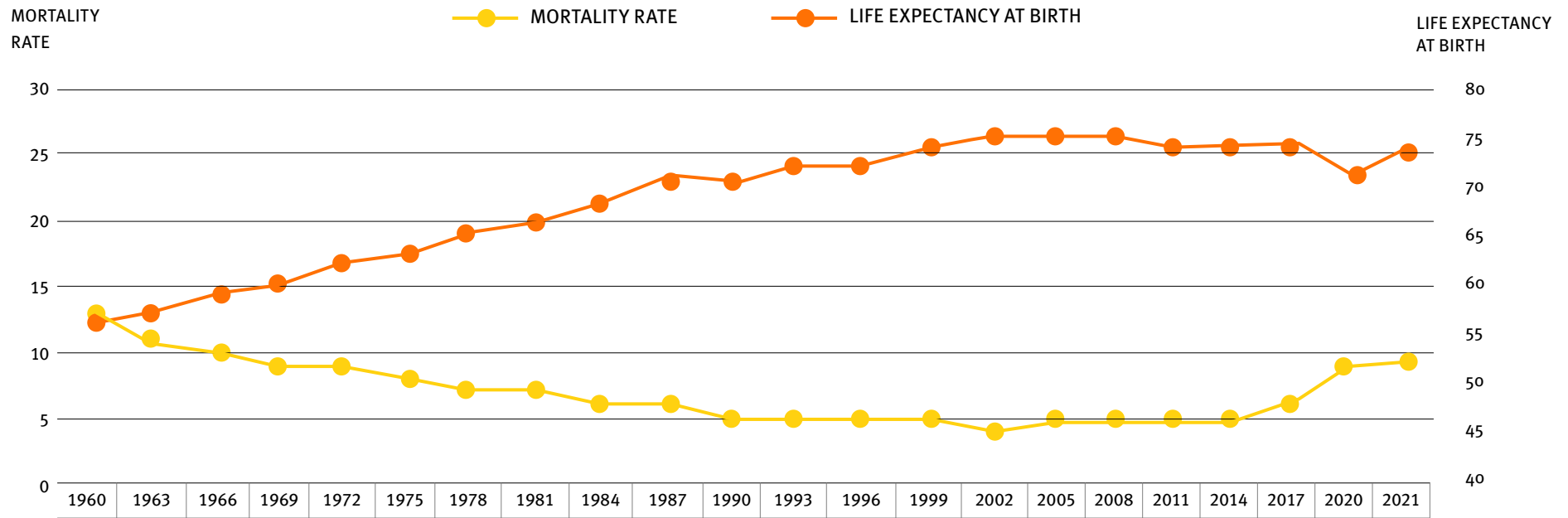
coverage affected 14 million Mexicans, which was addressed through a program based on the primary health care model.⁵¹

Public health interventions were an integral part of the health reform and included actions such as an increase in the quality and availability of water and better access to education for women as a vehicle for improving reproductive health. The Universal Immunization Program decreased mortality from diarrheal diseases in children under 5 years of age, notably to an average of 6.4% per year between 1984 and 1989 and 17.8% between 1990 and 1993 (Frenk *et al.*, 2003).

The decrease in mortality and life expectancy increases is part of the progress seen over time. In 1930, people lived an average of 34 years; in 1970, this indicator averaged 61 years. In 2019, it was 74 years old (INEGI, 2020). At the same time, mortality has been reduced until its increase in 2020 and 2021, given the health crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Graph 27).

⁵¹ Refers to health promotion and protection.

GRAPH 27. EVOLUTION OF LIFE EXPECTANCY AND MORTALITY RATE IN MEXICO
PER 1,000 PERSONS



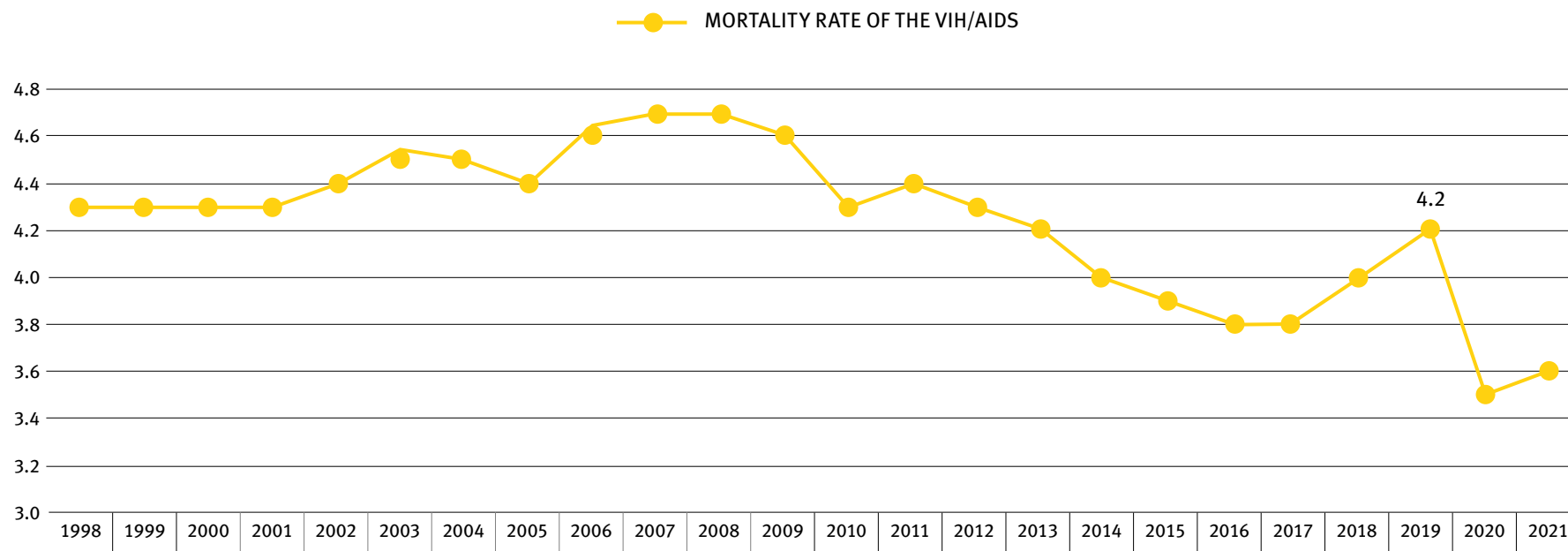
Source: In-house elaboration with data from World Bank (n.d.3) and Conapo (n.d).

Given the efforts to confront the emerging AIDS⁵² epidemic, it was estimated in 1995 that almost 10,000 cases would be avoided by the year 2000, thus giving

52 HIV/AIDS cases went from 3,799 in 1990 to 6,061 in 1995, increasing to 9,724 in 2000, continuing with an upward trend until 2006 (11,769) when cases gradually decreased. The largest increases were in 2018 with 17,542, 2019 (17,507) and 2022 (17,620).

ing Mexico one of the lowest rates of HIV/AIDS infection. The evolution of HIV mortality showed different trends: from 1990 to 1993, it registered its highest growth (23.8% per year); between 1993 and 1996, it continued to grow, although at a lower rate (7.9% per year). Between 1996 and 1999, there was a first decline (-4.1% annually) due to access to highly active

GRAPH 28. EVOLUTION OF THE HIV/AIDS MORTALITY RATE BY YEAR



Source: In-house elaboration prepared by the authors with data from the Health Secretariat Information System (Government of Mexico, n.d.1).

antiretroviral treatment (HAART) for people with social security. From 1999 to 2008, the trend remained stable (Frenk *et al.*, 2003)

Finally, from 2008, when universal and free access to HAART was consolidated throughout the country, a significant downward trend began (-3.0%), so that HIV mortality in Mexico decreased by more than 20% between 2008 and 2015 (Bravo *et al.*, 2023), as a result of the reforms implemented. Unfortunately, by

2019 (prior to the pandemic), the highest mortality rate was presented with 4.2 deaths of people with HIV/AIDS per 100,000, the exact figure as that reported in 2013, which implies a setback of at least 6 years (Graph 28).

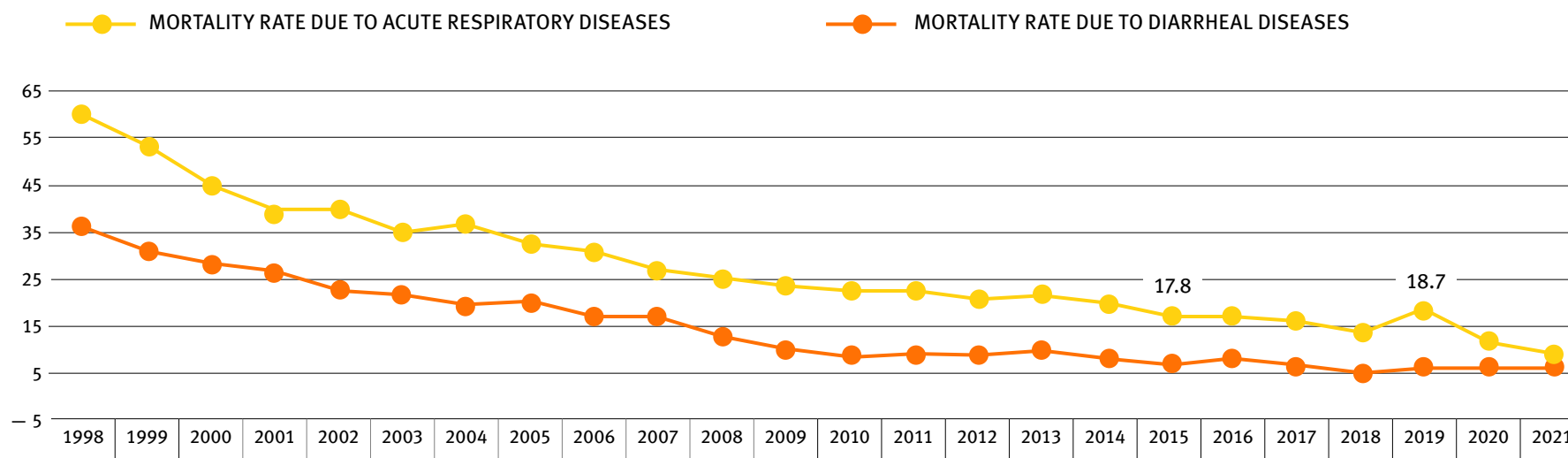
Likewise, the advances implemented with the second generation of health reforms resulted in the fact that the last cases of poliomyelitis and measles were registered 30 years ago (1991 and 1993, respectively)

(Frenk *et al.*, 2003). It was not until 2020 that Mexico produced an outbreak of measles, reporting up to 1,364 probable cases (WHO, 2020), of which 124 were confirmed. What is worrisome is that after almost 23 years, health problems that had already been controlled reemerged. There was also an improvement in the nutritional status of children during the 1990s: the prevalence of underweight children under 5 years of age decreased by almost half between 1988 and 1999, while the prevalence of diarrhea decreased by more than 30%. Graph 29 evidences the downward

trend in both the mortality rate for diarrheal diseases in children under five (per 100 thousand children under five) and the mortality rate for acute respiratory diseases, with a reversal in 2019 (18.7) more than what was reported in 2015 (17.8).

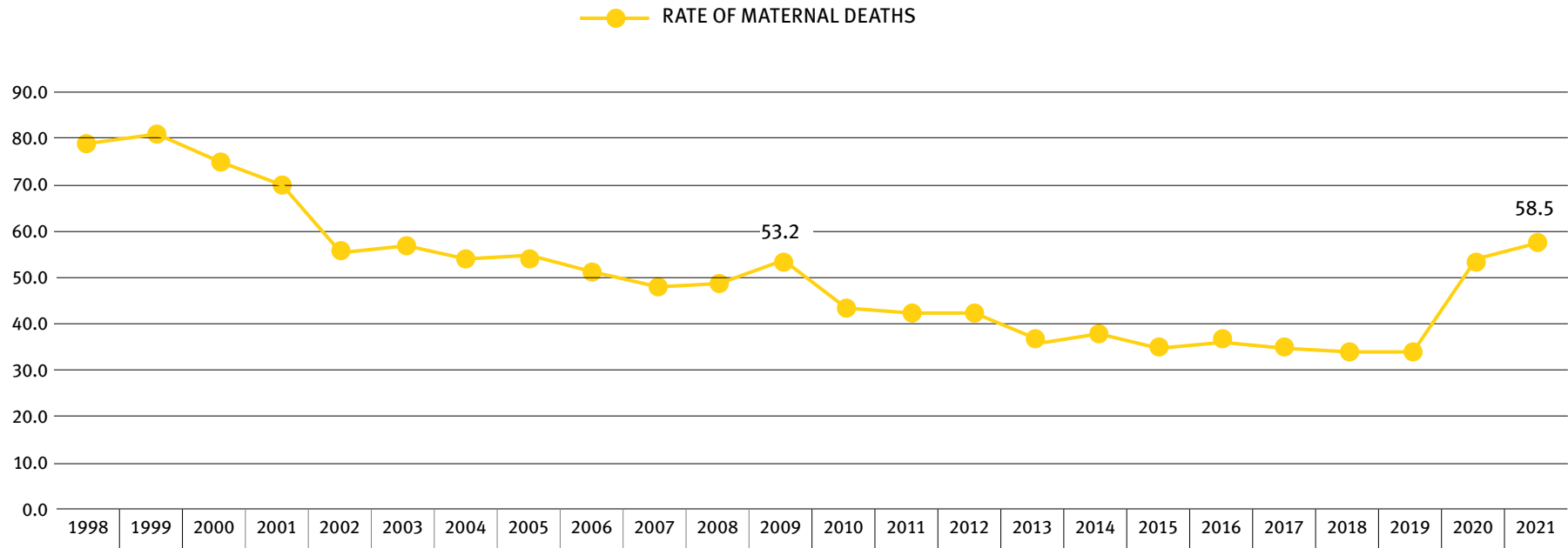
Likewise, during the implementation of the reforms, there were decreases in maternal mortality that were later lost. It went from 79.8 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 1998 to 75.5 in 2000 and to 53.2 in 2010; it reached its lowest point in 2015 (35.0). Un-

GRAPH 29. EVOLUTION OF MORTALITY RATES IN CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE DUE TO ACUTE RESPIRATORY DISEASES AND DIARRHEAL DISEASES (DEATHS PER 100 THOUSAND CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE)



Source: In-house elaboration prepared by the authors with data from the Health Secretariat Information System (Government of Mexico, n.d.1).

GRAPH 30. EVOLUTION OF THE MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO
(DEATHS PER 100,000 LIVED BIRTHS)



Source: In-house elaboration with data from the Information System of the Ministry of Health (Government of Mexico, n.d.).

fortunately, 2020 and 2021 showed a drastic 20-year setback to reaching 2010 levels, with 53 Evolution of the maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births).² and 58.5 deaths per 100,000 live births (Graph 30).

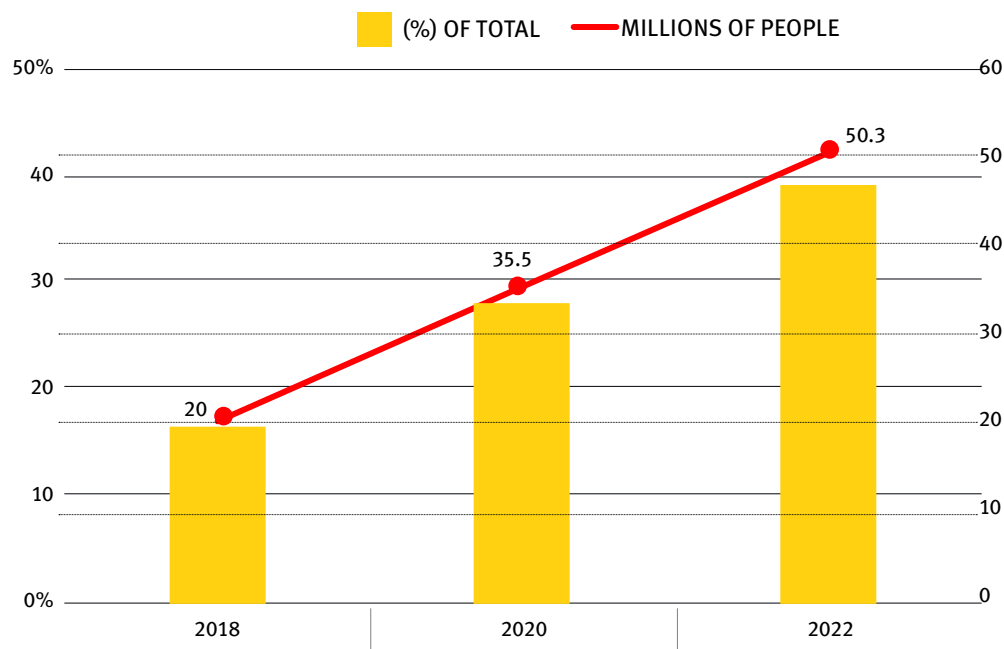
The third-generation reforms, implemented in the early 1990s, favored systemic changes to reorganize the system of basic functions (administration,

financing, and provision). Decentralizing health services for the uninsured was completed, allowing the Ministry of Health to focus on its steering role; the quality of services was improved; and a package of essential healthcare interventions was extended to target groups of poor people in rural areas. Progresá (an incentive-based welfare program) was also introduced for health, education, and nutrition (Frenk *et al.*, 2003).

This trend of practically uninterrupted improvement halted during the López Obrador administration. Public health has not been at the top of the current government’s agenda. As we have warned in *Signos Vitales* (2022d), the dismantling of an already weakened sector with the destruction of Seguro Popular and the failed implementation of Insabi at the beginning of the government, which at the time left 15.6 million people without health services by increasing the lack of access to health services by 12 percentage points from 2018 to 2020 (Coneval, n.d.1). The pandemic derived from COVID–19 came to evidence the fragility of the National Health System.

The clearest example of the current setback affecting Mexico’s public health policies is the widening gap in health inequalities. Previous efforts showed that women in the country’s poorest states achieved the most significant gains in life expectancy up to the 2000s (74 years) (Frenk *et al.*, 2003). However, in 2022, the lack of access to health services increased both the number of people without access and the percentage of the population with this lack of access. In 2022, 50.3 million people (39.1% of the population) did not have access to health services, an increase of 151% or 30 million more people, compared to what was reported in 2018 (Graph 31).

GRAPH 31. POPULATION WITHOUT ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES 2018–2022



Source: In-house elaboration with data from Coneval (2018–2022) (Coneval n.d.1).

Despite the Government's declared fight against poverty, the decisions indicate that the most affected population has been those under poverty conditions who do not have social security and who attended units of the Ministry of Health, Insabi, or IMSS–Bienestar. In 2020, the poor population without access to health increased to 23.1%; by 2018, it was much lower (10%) (Coneval, n.d.). Currently, the change of model from Insabi to IMSS–Bienestar is a clear sign of the failure of the health sector, which cannot guarantee universal access to health for 54% of the population without entitlement (Shamah *et al.*, 2021).

THE POOR POPULATION WITHOUT ACCESS TO HEALTH:

IN 2018 IT WAS 10%. IN 2020 INCREASED TO 23.1%

THE CHANGE OF MODEL FROM INSABI TO IMSS–BIENESTAR IS A CLEAR SIGN OF THE FAILURE OF THE HEALTH SECTOR, WHICH CANNOT GUARANTEE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO HEALTH FOR 54% OF THE POPULATION WITHOUT ENTITLEMENT.

SHAMAH *ET AL.*, 2021).

◀ Dismantling of technical capabilities

With just over a year to go before the end of this government's administration, one of President López Obrador's stated and unfulfilled objectives in the area of health is that Mexico should have a "health system like the one in Canada, the United Kingdom or Denmark." The other objective referred to the effective access of all Mexicans to quality services, decisions that would imply essential changes. However, the evidence reflects the failed strategy followed by the Federal Executive, not only decreasing the sectoral indicators to levels of years ago but also delaying the sense of sectoral progress, a fact that will reduce its recovery in the coming years.

The medical services model used in countries such as the United Kingdom, Denmark, Spain, Ireland, Portugal, and others deals with medical services strategies based on the Beveridge Model, such as the British National Health Service, which became an icon of the welfare state. The financing of this public system comes directly from the general state budget and is also provided under conditions of universality, equity, and free of charge (Cabo, 2010).⁵³

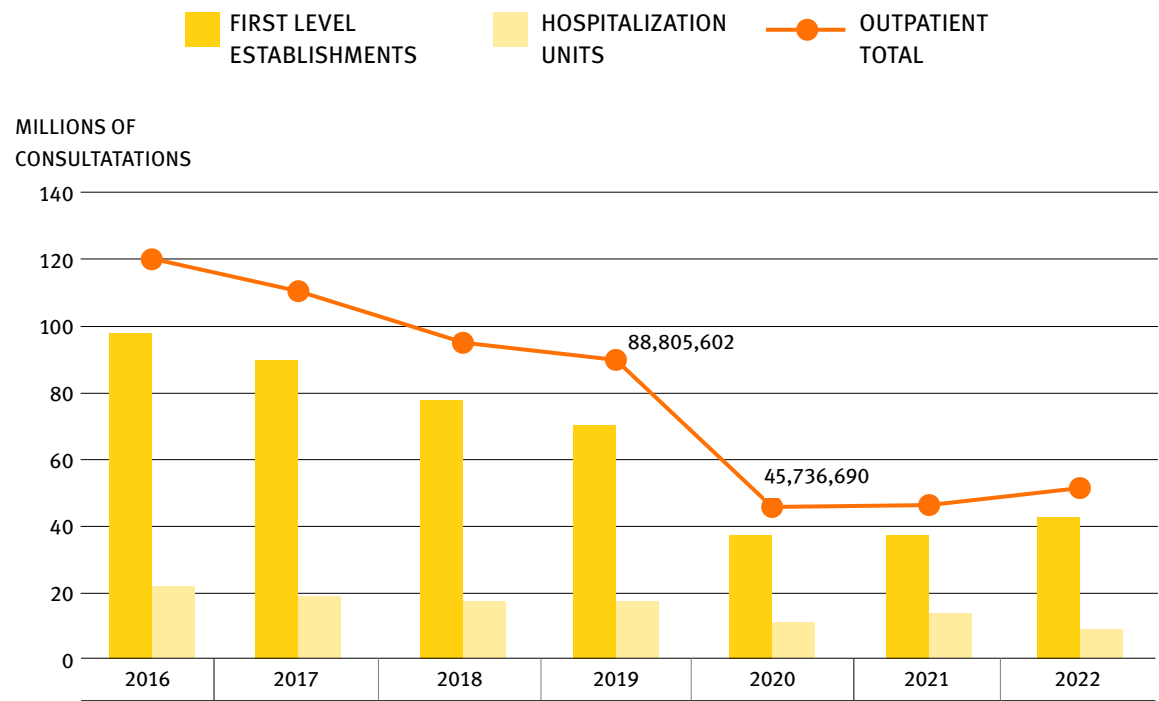
⁵³ Financing is totally or mostly dependent on state funds and legal residents have free access to primary care, outpa-

Even though both objectives pursue basic coverage in the health system, consultations granted in Mexico both in first-level facilities and in hospitalization and outpatient units have shown significant drops since 2019 (Graph 33). That is consultations granted yearly since the beginning of the current administration have decreased, even without considering the COVID-19 pandemic, since the drop occurred at the end of 2019. Consultations in first-level facilities have decreased drastically after 2019, ceasing to provide more than 32 million consultations from one year to the next (from 2019 to 2020) (Government of Mexico, n.d.1). Although to a lesser extent; hospitalization units also presented a decrease of more than 10 million consultations from 2019 to 2020 (Graph 32).

On the other hand, the abandonment of care is measured in the number of discharges attended year over year. Since 2018, the number of attention to other conditions unrelated to COVID-19 has decreased. That is, hospital discharges attending most health problems have decreased by more than half a million in 2019 (Graph 33).

tient specialty care consultations, hospital admissions and emergency services. However, such health care models are financed mainly by national taxes and earmarked budgets, based on clinical need rather than the user's ability to pay.

GRAPH 32. CONSULTATIONS BY TYPE OF UNIT NATIONWIDE

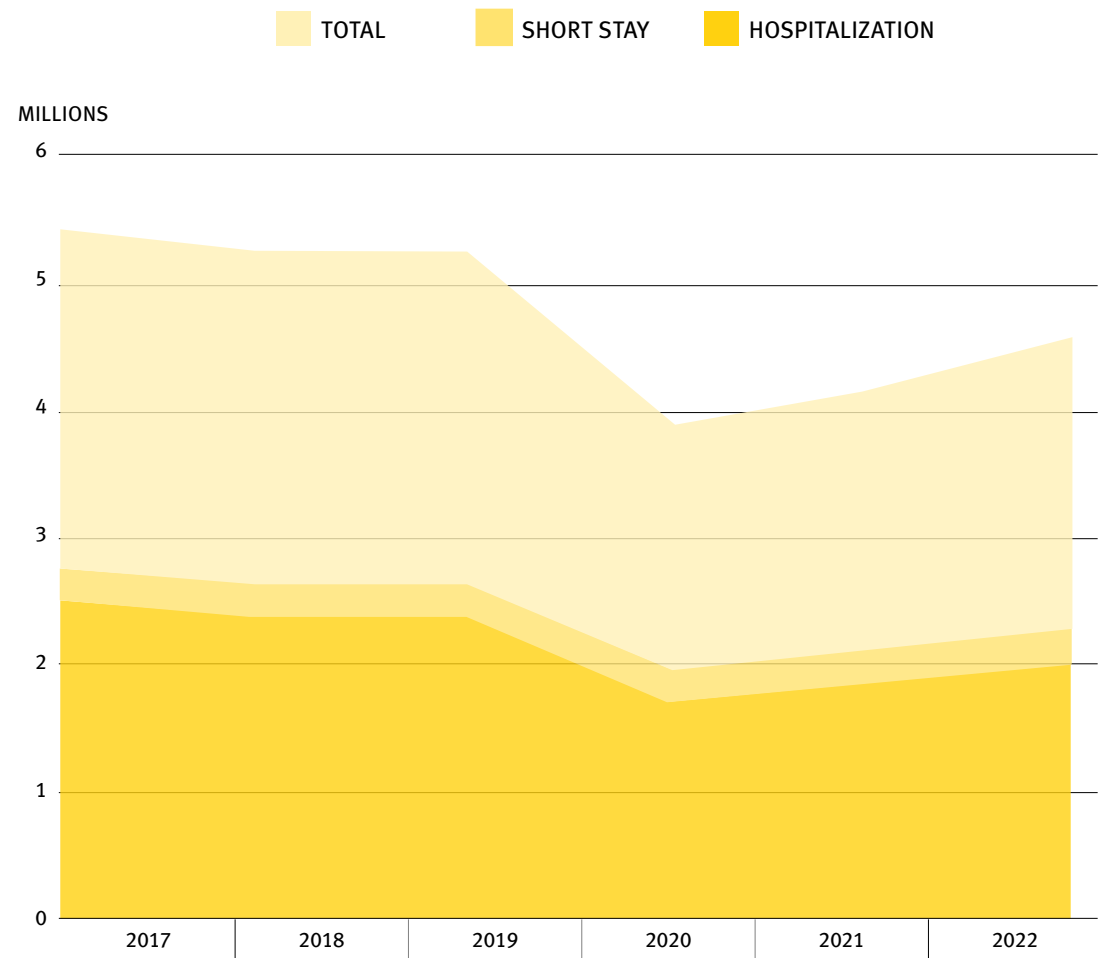


Source: In-house elaboración with data from Health Secretariat Information System (Government of Mexico n.d.1).

The current public health system has not only failed to contain significant deficiencies but has deepened the existing ones; as a result, other ailments were left unattended due to the arrival of the pandemic. With the violation of the right to health, the right to access medicines was also violated. The percentage of unfilled prescriptions increased since the end of 2019 (before the virus arrived in Mexico), reaching its highest point in January and February 2020. Although the number of unfilled prescriptions decreased towards the end of 2020, it remained 6 times higher than reported at the beginning of 2019 (Cero Desabasto, 2021). The shortage of medicines and medical supplies has been a collateral effect of the changes in the health sector under the current administration, which, together with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, reflect part of the causes of the collapse in the health sector (Signos Vitales, 2022d). Although health authorities have not reported significant drug shortages, the number of unfilled prescriptions in the IMSS has tripled, and reports of drug shortages for different treatments have risen.

Unfortunately, despite the stumbling blocks of the new drug procurement model implemented by the Mexican Government, a decontextualized policy continues to be implemented, lacking scientific argu-

GRAPH 33. EVOLUTION OF THE VOLUME OF HOSPITAL DISCHARGES BY TYPE DE STAY



Source: In-house elaboration with data from the Government of Mexico (n.d.1).

ments that threaten the quality of medical supplies and drugs. At the same time, it threatens qualified suppliers who, from the top of the government, are associated with alleged acts of corruption, which have not even been indicted. The fact is that a little more than a year before the end of the administration, the government's approach continues without results and continues to affect essential variables such as the cost of medicines, delays in the supply of medical treatments, and therefore, the health and life of Mexicans is being violated.

In sum, the drop in the number of consultations, unfilled prescriptions, and hospitalizations are examples of what it means that millions of people stopped receiving the treatment and care necessary to maintain their level of health and treat an illness promptly. This reflects an imminent loss of rights with direct effects on the quality of life of Mexicans.

One more of the attacks on health by the current government involves the cancellation of the 35 Official Mexican Standards (NOM for its acronym in Spanish) on health, despite the responsibility of the Mexican State to care for and preserve health. In Mexico, Mexican Official Standards (NOMs) were developed as technical regulations to establish the characteristics

of processes when they constitute a risk to people's safety or damage human health. Until the end of May, there were 67 NOMs that health professionals were obliged to comply with, and non-compliance should be sanctioned. However, on June 1, 2023, the Ministry of Health canceled 32 of these standards without explanation (Valderrama, 2023).

Although the cancellation process had been suspended on July 14 through an injunction, it was not until August 7 that the same federal judge removed the suspension she had granted in July to stop the process of cancellation of the 35 NOMs on health matters announced by the Mexican Government on June 1st. This reveals another of the attacks on the health of Mexicans that seeks to free the government from the obligation to prevent, control, and care for illnesses such as breast cancer, cervical cancer, prostate cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, overweight, obesity, sexually transmitted infections, osteoporosis, as well as vector-borne diseases (dengue).

Vaccination coverage loss

Although vaccination is one of the most effective public health interventions for disease prevention, in addition to being an indisputable human right (Mongua *et al.*, 2023), in 2021, only one in three children (up to one year of age) in Mexico (27.5%) had a complete immunization scheme.⁵⁴ Only one-third of children older than one year and up to two years had at least four vaccines (35.8%) (Shamah *et al.*, 2021). This unprecedented reduction in the country's vaccination system as a public health measure significantly reverses the achievements that had been obtained over the years: a) elimination of various diseases, b) reduction of morbidity, c) disability, and d) mortality in different population groups, but particularly in children. The deficient management of the Mexican Health System has also caused deficiencies such as shortages and insufficiency in implementing the primary immunization scheme, with more than 23 million children not receiving vaccines in 2020. This figure represents 3.7 million more children than in 2019, the highest number since 2009 (Asociación Mexicana de Vacunología, n.d).

⁵⁴The complete vaccination schedule includes: Hepatitis B, tuberculosis (BCG), Pentavalent, Pneumococcal, Rotavirus, MMR and MMR vaccines.

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Valderrama, 2023

One of the most dramatic cases refers to the fact that in Mexico, previous health authorities placed particular emphasis on immunization actions, which was reflected in the fact that in 1990, 73.8% of one-year-old children had vaccination coverage against measles, and by 2012, vaccination coverage with MMR (measles, rubella, and mumps MMR vaccine) had increased to 86.8%. However, the current insufficiency of vaccines has increased vulnerability with the persistence of low vaccination rates in the country. In recent years, the IMSS alone has had a 49% deficit in measles vaccination (Herrera *et al.*, 2020). According to the Mexican Vaccination Observatory, the percentage of the population without measles vaccine increased dramatically to 68% in 2019, and by 2020, only 21.8% of the target population had the opportunity to receive measles vaccination.

As if that were not enough, the most precise description of the failure of health management in Mexico is reflected in the number of deaths. From the pandemic's beginning in 2020 until September 2022, INEGI (2023b) recorded 2,820,990 deaths in Mexico. However, 2,027,365 deaths were expected. This means that 793,625 more deaths occurred than expected for that period (an excess of 39.15%), which places Mex-

ico among the countries with the highest number of deaths due to the pandemic. One of the hypotheses of this scenario is the late and ineffective attention to the health crisis, together with the weak governmental response, institutional destruction, and an unnecessary focus on austerity that has claimed and will continue to claim lives.

VACCINATION:

IN 1990, 78% CHILDREN OF ONE-YEAR OLD HAD VACCINATION AGAINST MEASLES

IN 2012, THIS FIGURE INCREASED TO 86.8% WITH TRIPLE VACCINATION

IN 2019, DECREASED TO 68% CHILDREN VACCINATED AGAINST MEASLES, AND FOR 2020, ONLY 21.8% CHILDREN GOT THE VACCINE.

EXCESS DEATHS BECAUSE OF PANDEMIC.

INEGI REPORTED 793 MIL 625 MORE DEATHS THAN EXPECTED BETWEEN 2020 APRIL 2020 AND SEPTEMBER 2022, WITH AN EXCESS OF 39.15%

One more burden: the accumulation of labor problems in the health sector

With the arrival of the current government came various social and even health problems that deepened several existing crises. In Mexico, the constitution of the health system is made up of the public and private sectors. The former includes institutions that provide care to formal workers and their families and institutions that provide care to informal workers, the unemployed, and people outside the labor market (56.5% of physicians in the health sector provide care). The private sector includes institutions that provide services to the population with the capacity to pay (attended by the remaining 43.5% of the total number of physicians in Mexico). The main public social security institution within the public sector is the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS). Between 2003 and 2015, IMSS increased the number of physicians by 40%. For its part, Seguro Popular (now defunct) allowed the change of employment status of 24,534 workers hired by fees in 2009, a fact highlighted in Mexico in the last 25 years.

The Mexican health system faces significant challenges in achieving universal coverage and access to



Image: "¡Not a white coat less!". Doctors demand security while working in his profession at <https://piedepagina.mx/ni-una-bata-menos-medicos-demandan-seguridad-para-ejercer-su-profesion/>

health services, and one of the greatest challenges is human resources. Medical personnel face high levels of labor precariousness. In addition to an unequal distribution of physicians and specialists within the country, employment conditions are unfavorable for medical personnel, including physicians working in offices adjacent to pharmacies (CAF). Such labor precariousness includes forms of employment, atypical work contracts, limited benefits and labor rights, la-

bor uncertainty, and precariousness concerning their income (Menéndez *et al.*, 2007).

Between 2019 and 2020, it was found that labor precariousness is present in both public and private sector healthcare personnel. Of the 38,414⁵⁵ physicians working in the private sector, 20.5% have an income below or up to 2 minimum wages, 21.3% lack a written contract, 27.8% lack social benefits, and 43.9% lack health insurance. These percentages are notably lower among the 104,055 physicians working in the public sector, as 17.1% have an income below or up to two minimum wages, 4.1% lack a written contract, 12.1% lack social benefits, and 11.3% lack health insurance; in particular, significant differences are observed between both sectors in aspects such as lack of a written contract, social benefits, and health insurance (Montañez *et al.*, 2022).

These data represent a challenge concerning the employment conditions of those who work in the health system. In addition, Mexico still has a deficit in human resources in health, as we have seen in the number of physicians and nurses per 1,000 people. However, conditions within the country do not solve

the problem. Medical graduates who aspire to enter a medical residency must pass the National Examination for Medical Residency Applicants (ENARM), and this offer is limited, with an annual admission rate of 26%, and this further segments the job opportunities for physicians.

On the other hand, the loss of union bargaining left labor conditions and benefits uncertain, together with the conditions generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which created greater instability and labor risks. Such labor precariousness implies medium and long-term costs that may affect, on the one hand, health, quality of life, and the possibilities of professional growth of health personnel and, on the other hand, may affect the services provided to the population. This makes it necessary to formulate policies that consider both the health rights of beneficiaries and the needs of health professionals while regulating the public and private sectors.

⁵⁵ Cross-sectional study based on the ENOE considering the 4 quarters of 2019 and first quarter of 2020 (Montañez, *et al.*, 2022).

Conclusions

Although health conditions in Mexico presented extraordinary challenges, the arrival of the current government, combined with the COVID-19 virus, unmasked and deepened the gaps in health. The attacks on the health of Mexicans can be seen in the decreases in health coverage and within public health institutions, the drop in consultations granted, as well as the absence of medicines. However, the actions implemented did not reflect a containment of the widening gaps. However, on the contrary, there were direct attacks such as the cancellation of the NOMs or the institutional dismantling (failed substitution of Seguro Popular by Insabi and its new incorporation into IMSS-Bienestar).

Many of the effects have been manifested in the increase in maternal deaths, setbacks in vaccination, and the death of around 800,000 people in excess. The almost null governmental response details the tragedy in which the health balances have become for a very aggrieved Mexico. We are at a crucial moment where the responses of the government and society, in general, have shaped the present and will determine the country's future.

The attacks on the health of Mexicans can be seen in:

- » *increase in maternal deaths*
- » *setbacks in vaccination*
- » *death of around 800 thousand people in excess*
- » *decrease in health coverage*
- » *the drop in consultations granted*
- » *the absence of medicines*
- » *30 million people without access to health services.*

The almost null governmental response details the tragedy in which the health balances have become for a very aggrieved Mexico.





**GENERAL
CONCLUSION**

General

CONCLUSION

In this report, we visualize the conditions that determine social Mexico, analyzing the loss of some social rights and the violation of many others. Although efforts have been made in the past to improve this scenario, the situation suggests that gaps have deepened in the country, which, although they are the result of structural processes, could have diminished their effects. The evidence shows a deepening of social gaps due to a clear reproduction of policies without focusing on rights or “non-discrimination.” The role of governments has included various strategies to combat poverty with misleading results, which show a false triumphalism since the population living in extreme poverty continues to be much more deprived each time.

Despite Mexico being one of the countries that best knows its poverty, this report highlights the deterioration of social welfare and the constant violations of social rights. The detriment of human development, the increase of social deprivation, the data of backwardness, and the low or null social mobility are nothing more than expressions of the fragility of a State that has not provided answers or solutions to problems of years ago. If this trend of limited action and containment of problems continues, the effects will continue to be felt, especially against the rights and needs of historically vulnerable groups, thus reflecting a social Mexico with significant challenges.

Education and health are two of the essential public services provided by the States, which to date show a notorious erosion, dismantling, and disarticulation under changes that compromise social welfare. The results presented here do not reflect improvements in the face of the health crisis but quite the opposite. Since 2018, more students dropped out of the classrooms despite the policy of implementing educational scholarships that, in the end, turned out to benefit those who needed it the least. The catastrophic scenario related to school dropouts demonstrates the government's inability to address the needs of the new generations despite millions of pesos earmarked for that purpose. Learning has not been the priority of the educational authorities either, and in the face of school closures, confusion in textbooks, and the conduct of the "new educational policy," they have put educational quality under threat.

The constant and permanent attack of the government on everything visualized as progress has also reached the scientific sector. The reversal as of 2018 includes unilateral practices such as the imposition of the leadership of Conacyt (now Conahcyt) and the changes to the Law on Humanities, Science, Technology, and Innovation that limit the capacity of the sector, weaken the scientific system and contribute

to disconnect research centers from universities and the productive sector, centralizing decision making and the direction of the scientific agenda. These are just some of the actions that jeopardize past achievements, which, although not entirely successful, at least satisfied the principles of academic freedom and scientific plurality. In short, the actions implemented have endangered the incorporation of young people into the scientific sector and hinder the promotion of knowledge between generations.

The dramatic results in terms of the health of Mexicans can be seen in the decreases in health coverage, leaving more than 30 million more people without access to health services. The shortage of medicines and the setbacks in the capacity of medical units (consultations granted and hospital discharges) in public health institutions is evidence of the deterioration in public health, with historic declines in measles vaccination, the HIV crisis, maternal mortality, and life expectancy as some examples. As if that were not enough, there have been direct attacks on people's right to health, such as the attempted cancellation of the Mexican Official Standards, accumulating more significant lags and revealing the place of health in the national agenda of this government.

Mexico is not only going through a crisis in the social area. The country is immersed in a very complicated and adverse governance situation. In their attempt to destroy everything previously built, the current authorities have justified all their actions under the false rhetoric of “the poor first” and using as their primary tools the dismantling of institutions and the disappearance of critical agencies. These actions leave a social Mexico adrift, with limited capacity to face short, medium, and long-term challenges.

Mexico is not only going through a crisis in the social area. The country is immersed in a very complicated and adverse governance situation.

Social Mexico is adrift, with limited capacity to face short, medium, and long-term challenges.





Image: <https://viajes.nationalgeographic.com.es/lifestyle/bibliotecas-mas-modernas>

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