

FRACTURES IN MEXICO'S SOCIAL MOBILITY MECHANISMS

SEPTEMBER 2025

SIGNOS **VÍDEO**

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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1 CONTEXT and GENERAL INTRODUCTION

https://www.archdaily.cl/cl/983054/la-estetizacion-de-la-desigualdad-paisajes-de-contraste-en-la-periferia-de-la-ciudad-de-mexico/6298ee223e4b31a48a000002-la-estetizacion-de-la-desigualdad-paisajes-de-contraste-en-la-periferia-de-la-ciudad-de-mexico-foto?next_project=no

1 CONTEXT and GENERAL «INTRODUCTION

Studying and analyzing the current state of the engines of social mobility and prosperity is essential for understanding the origins of Mexico's social and economic processes and their future outlook. Comprehending the condition and functioning of the engines that sustain these dynamics of progress, growth and development is also crucial for identifying strategies aimed at improving the quality of life of individuals and communities in the country. This report finds that, in many cases, these engines—education, health, employment, income, justice, social protection, among others—have ceased to operate as mechanisms of inclusion and advancement and

have instead begun to represent structural barriers for millions of people. Rather than fostering socioeconomic mobility, the generalized conditions of the country have promoted and perpetuated inequality, reinforcing disadvantages inherited decades ago.

The analysis reveals that social mobility in Mexico is strongly determined by individuals' socioeconomic and educational background, which restricts their ability to improve their living conditions. Half of those born into the lowest income quintile remain there for life and only 2% manage to move up to the highest quintile. Regional disparities are stark: in the south, 64% of those born into poor households remain in

Social mobility in Mexico is strongly determined by individuals' socioeconomic and educational background.

that condition, compared to 31% in the center-north. Gender also plays a role: 51% of women born into poor households do not overcome this condition, and their probability of reaching the highest quintile is three times lower than that of men. These data reveal a structural pattern of inequality that restricts mobility and perpetuates intergenerational poverty (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

In the educational sphere, it is confirmed that schooling is likewise hereditary. Parents' level of education has a notable impact on the educational opportunities of their children. The data indicate that 4 out of 10 individuals (39%) who come from households where their parents only completed primary education do not progress beyond that level. Of these, only 36% finish secondary school, which is the national average level of schooling (9.7 years of study). This means that three out of four individuals do not surpass the national average educational level (completion of secondary school). Likewise, inequality of opportunity—determined 54% by the economic resources of origin and 11% by parents' educational attainment—limits the accumulation of human capital and, consequently, the capacity of the educational system to function as an engine of social mobility (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

The latest results of the 2025 National Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ENIGH), an instrument which, together with another survey on socioeconomic aspects by INEGI, measures poverty, indicate that at least 13 million people moved out of that condition between 2018 and 2024. This is undoubtedly a highly significant advance which, according to the ENIGH, was primarily the result of employment or labor income and resources provided through social programs. In fact, the category that increased the most was household transfers. While these data are consistent with improvements recorded in the wage bill, presumably driven by increases in the minimum wage and the incorporation of workers into the formal sector, they are not consistent with other relevant data such as household income reported in the System of National Accounts, and therefore must be interpreted with caution.¹

¹ Although the ENIGH is a well-established survey and its information undergoes a rigorous validation process to ensure its quality and accuracy, as occurs in other countries due to its inherent difficulty, this survey in Mexico presents certain structural challenges that have been questioned for several years by various researchers. The most critical of these is the bias arising from the possibility that respondents provide incomplete or inaccurate information about their income and expenditures, and the fact that relevant income data for which more precise administrative information exists are not used for the calculation and validation of results, as is the case with data from the System of Na-

1. A structural pattern of inequality that restricts mobility and perpetuates intergenerational poverty (Monroy-Gomez y Velez-Grajales, 2025).

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The persistence of poverty and inequality in Mexico has a structural foundation: at least 48% of the differences in life outcomes are explained by factors beyond individual control, such as geographic origin, gender, Indigenous identity, or skin color. Between 2017 and 2023, the incidence of income poverty declined by only 7 percentage points², from 48% to 41%, and even so, three out of every four people born into the lowest quintile remain below the welfare threshold in adulthood. These data suggest that, without profound interventions in education, the economy and the reduction of structural inequalities, the en-

tional Accounts, social programs, and remittances (Leyva, 2025; Cardenas, 2025). These data are not consistent with reported income. For this reason, Signos Vitales joins the recommendation that the National Institute of Statistics and Geography revisit the methodology and calculation framework for household income and expenditures in order to improve its estimates (Teruel, G. *et al.* 2025). In this regard, it is essential that INEGI adopt a truly inclusive approach, convening specialized civil society, academia, and national and international organizations to review and validate the most relevant statistical instruments. In this report, we will take the official data from ENIGH 2025 as valid, but with a degree of caution.

- ² This figure is an estimate by CEEY based on its ESRU-EMOVI surveys of 2017 and 2023. The incidence of poverty is defined as the percentage of the population with a household per capita current income below the value of the poverty line corresponding to October 2017 and 2023, respectively. This refers to the incidence of income poverty and not to the incidence of multidimensional poverty (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

gines of social mobility in Mexico will continue to operate in a limited manner, perpetuating inequity and restricting inclusive economic development (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

Between 1993 and 2024, the average growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was barely 2% annually, and between 2018 and 2024 this figure fell to 0.86%, representing the lowest rate since the implementation of NAFTA in 1994. In individual terms, GDP per capita increased by only 15.20 real pesos in just over six years, reflecting stagnation that prevents macroeconomic growth from being translated into tangible improvements for the population at large, although notable redistributive gains are evident. From 2022 to 2024, the average quarterly household income rose by 10.6%, following a slight recovery to 2016 income levels. This increase has been driven to a large extent by rising labor income in the lowest deciles (INEGI, 2025). However, it does not reflect a structural improvement in the overall labor conditions of the population. The latest poverty data (INEGI, 2025) indicate that more than 62 million people lack access to social security and more than 44 million lack health services. In Mexico, 67 out of every 100 people are poor and vulnerable. This figure, in addition to being alarming, suggests that basic social rights are being eroded.

3 Between 2018 and 2024, the average growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was barely 0.86%, representing the lowest rate since the implementation of NAFTA in 1994.

4 INEGI indicates that more than 62 million people lack access to social security and more than 44 million lack health services (2025).

Institutional erosion is not merely a contextual condition; it is a central factor preventing the engines of mobility from functioning. The disappearance or weakening of autonomous institutions, the recentralization of functions, the elimination of evidence-based programs, the absence of evaluation for investment projects and the technical dismantling of the public apparatus reduce the State's capacity to provide rights and safeguard life trajectories. Without effective and legitimate institutions, there are no guarantees of access or continuity. The consequences are evident: territorial gaps intensify, accountability is weakened, and principles of public policy are replaced by decisions laden with short-term political, ideological and electoral considerations. Citizens remain trapped between promises of inclusion and improvement that never materialize into concrete institutional actions.

To this economic and social scenario is added a profound institutional crisis. Mexico ranks 118th out of 142 countries in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index (2024), with a score of 0.41. Structural impunity reaches 99% of crimes committed, and barely 0.26% of victims obtain an effective response from the judicial system. The perception of corruption in the courts stands at 53.6%, and in 90% of municipal-

ities there is neither a Public Prosecutor's Office nor courts. Moreover, the election of judges by popular vote, approved amid significant criticism and as part of a reform lacking technical foundation, puts judicial impartiality at risk and reveals the progressive deinstitutionalization of the State. The absence of justice and legal certainty reinforces structural inequality and fosters and deepens exclusion.

In light of this multidimensional deterioration, the present report by Signos Vitales offers an X-ray of the country for those seeking to understand the magnitude and complexity of the social mobility crisis facing Mexico. Through a methodology structured by age groups, the analysis makes it possible to observe how living conditions, access to rights and opportunities for upward mobility are manifested differently across the life cycle. From early childhood to old age, critical moments are identified in which the State could intervene more effectively, as well as omissions that prove irreversible. This division is not only methodological but also strategic, as it allows for the design of public policy lines aimed at preventing, correcting or compensating cumulative inequalities.

While the current economic environment still offers limited opportunities for privileged sectors, the over-

5 Mexico ranks 118th out of 142 countries in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index (2024), with a score of 0.41.

all outlook is markedly exclusionary. Development opportunities in today's Mexico are concentrated among a minority with access to private education, quality health services, strong institutional networks and favorable geographic location. These conditions do not stem from a deliberate redistributive policy but rather reflect the continuity of historical structures of privilege that the current government has deepened. Far from building a minimum welfare floor, the political project led by Morena has dismantled key institutions, weakened the operational capacity of the State, canceled universal public programs and replaced structural policies with clientelist transfers. Instead of democratizing opportunities for social mobility, development has been restricted to those who already possessed prior advantages, widening the gap between the few who can aspire to prosper and the majority who face an increasingly constrained future.

For most Mexicans, the horizon of development has become increasingly narrow and distant. Social mobility is no longer a path available to broad sectors of the population but rather an exceptional possibility reserved for those born into advantageous contexts. Nonetheless, in Mexico, as demonstrated by the ENIGH 2025 data, individual effort remains a decisive engine sustaining millions of families who, despite

precarious employment, educational lag, or insecurity, find in their daily work the possibility of resisting and moving forward. Such personal merit, however, can only realize its full potential if accompanied by strong institutions and an environment that guarantees basic rights and reduces the structural inequalities that still hinder social mobility. Although for many Mexicans daily life is marked by precariousness, uncertainty and lack of prospects, individual effort continues to serve as an engine of resilience in the face of adversity. Yet, rather than a secure path to prosperity, today that effort has become a struggle not to fall behind. In this Mexico that seems to have come to a standstill, development—true prosperity—remains a possible goal, but one increasingly distant for those starting from a position of exclusion, unless structural conditions are strengthened to transform personal merit into real opportunities for mobility.

In this report, we analyze all these problems through a division by life stages. This approach provides a crucial advantage: it allows inequality to be understood as the result of an accumulated process of disadvantages rather than as a static condition. It is not simply about pointing out who is poor and who is not, but about when and why people are excluded and how those low probabilities of exclusion can be

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Image: Mexican family at <https://www.anahuac.mx/mexico/noticias/Familias-en-Mexico-en-peligro-de-extincion>

reversed in later stages. Each age group represents not only a moment in time but also the outcome of vulnerabilities or fractures in the opportunities of millions of people. Thus, the report is organized into six major sections: preconditions; early childhood; childhood and adolescence; entry into productive life; adulthood; and older adults. This structure recognizes that trajectories are not linear and that public decisions must adapt to the life cycle.

This methodological approach also provides a much more precise picture of the Mexican context. By examining conditions of mobility and prosperity by age group, it becomes possible to identify systemic

failures that would otherwise be diluted in national averages. The lack of early childhood development, school dropout during adolescence, market failures affecting young people, or poverty in old age are not disconnected or isolated phenomena, but successive expressions of a system that fails to accompany people throughout their lives. Furthermore, this segmentation makes it possible to design more targeted public policies and strategic actions, tailored to the specific needs of each stage and with better results in terms of efficiency, coverage and impact. Viewing social mobility through this lens makes the accumulated shortcomings of the Mexican development model more clearly visible.

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The preconditions for social mobility reveal a fragile institutional structure, incapable of guaranteeing the fulfillment of rights. Public debt increased by more than 7 trillion pesos over the past six years, and the strong injection of resources generated a partial reversal of territorial inequality not seen in recent economic history: while the south of the country grew at an average annual rate of 3.9% between 2018 and 2023, the rest of the country grew only 0.6%—and 62.4%. This growth is explained by the construction sector, without lasting impacts on well-being. This implies that recent economic growth has been driven more by public spending and debt than by the dynamism of the economy. In the absence of inclusive and sustained economic growth, and without an effective strengthening of the institutional capacities of the State, social mobility loses its structuring function as a mechanism of cohesion and equity. Under these conditions, cases of intergenerational upward mobility are reduced to statistically marginal phenomena, incapable of correcting the structural gaps that perpetuate inequality.

Early childhood, a crucial stage for physical, cognitive and emotional development, presents alarming conditions. There are 12.4 million children under six years of age, of whom 41.9% live in poverty, 37.7% lack access

to health services (INEGI, 2025) and 12.8% suffer from chronic malnutrition. A total of 11.9% present anemia and in rural areas this figure rises to 23.4%. Furthermore, only 79.5% achieve adequate early childhood development (Shamah *et al.* 2024). These figures reveal that the environment into which millions of Mexican children are born is not only adverse but also conditions their future lives. The reduction in births by 31.1% between 2010 and 2023 and the demographic contraction in the center of the country (–19.2% in infants under one year of age) anticipate a transition for which the State is not yet prepared.

During childhood and adolescence, the education and health systems should consolidate opportunities and close gaps. However, Mexican adolescents face educational lag, violence, school dropout and lack of access to basic services. Twenty percent of children work, adolescent pregnancy remains high and educational desertion is on the rise. In Sinaloa, as a case study, 76.7% of adolescents consider living in their community to be dangerous and 26.4% know someone close who has been murdered. Inequality in learning outcomes and the absence of institutional protection at this stage seriously compromise the productive and personal future of millions of young people.

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Early childhood, a crucial stage for physical, cognitive and emotional development, presents alarming conditions: 41.9% out of 12.4 million children under 6 years old live in poverty.

At the beginning of productive life (ages 15 to 29), the outlook becomes even more complex. A total of 15.6 million young people face poverty or exclusion, of whom 4.9 million neither study nor work (ninis), 7.6 million are precariously employed and 3.1 million study under conditions of poverty. The disconnection between the education system and the labor market prevents successful transitions and access to decent jobs is limited. The State has exacerbated the problem by distorting market signals and reinforcing unsustainable union structures. Moreover, mental health problems and the increase in youth suicide point to a structural crisis. Organized crime has expanded its recruitment capacity among young people without alternatives and many choose migration as their only path to mobility. The loss of just over one million young people is irreparable and the labor market continues to age.

Adulthood (ages 30 to 59) should be the stage of economic and family consolidation, but in Mexico it is a period marked by precariousness. Women, in particular, face an overload of unpaid care work that limits their labor market participation: 50% are out of the workforce for this reason. The absence of a national care system perpetuates gender inequality. In addition, health coverage is insufficient and widespread

Mexican adolescents face educational lag, violence, school dropout and lack of access to basic services. Twenty percent of children work, adolescent pregnancy remains high and educational desertion is on the rise.



Image: "8 out of every 10 young people in Mexico face difficulties to find a job" at <https://mayacomunicacion.com.mx/8-de-cada-10-jovenes-en-mexico-enfrentan-dificultades-para-encontrar-empleo/>

insecurity prevents stability. Only 1% of reported crimes reach a judge and trust in institutions is at historic lows. Career paths are interrupted or downgraded, compromising both the present and access to decent pensions in the future.

Finally, older adults, beyond the improvement provided by the universal pension that expanded coverage from 11% of households in 2018 to 23% in 2024 (INEGI, 2025a), face a stage characterized by institutional abandonment. A total of 48.9% live in poverty, one in four face three or more social deprivations, and the majority depend on non-contributory pensions, insufficient to meet basic needs (INEGI, 2025k). Access to specialized medical services is limited and functional dependency is increasing without a public care network. Population aging is advancing, yet the institutional and fiscal structures have not adapted, while older adults are leaving the labor market at a faster rate than in the past. Older women, who faced labor exclusion throughout their lives, are doubly vulnerable in old age. This stage highlights the accumulated consequences of decades without effective protection.

In sum, this report shows that social mobility in Mexico is profoundly compromised. The social structure



Image: "Women caregivers subsidize the public health system" at <https://piedepagina.mx/cuidadoras-subsidian-el-sistema-de-salud-publica/>

not only reproduces inequality but also penalizes individual effort when it is not accompanied by adequate institutional conditions. By organizing the analysis by age groups, Signos Vitales provides a powerful tool for designing public policies that respond to the specific challenges of each stage of life. Moreover, it offers a critical narrative to rethink the development model, placing social justice, equity and effective redistribution at the center. This analysis is not only necessary: it is urgent.

This report does not aim to exhaust the debate, but rather to contribute to it from a perspective that confronts the dominant narrative of fragmented progress with multidimensional evidence. The figures, trajectories, and conditions described here confirm that social mobility in Mexico is increasingly determined by social inheritance and not by the outcomes of effective public policy. But it also makes clear that these failures are not random: they are the result of sustained institutional decisions, deliberate omissions, and the priorities of different governments that have placed welfare policies and ideological propaganda above the strengthening of institutional capacities. The value of this analysis lies in providing a technical tool that makes it possible to anticipate the risks of inertial continuity, but also to identify —with age, territorial and gender precision— the critical intervention points that could still partially reverse the country's downward trajectory. Mexico is not doomed, but its current course brings it dangerously close to a foretold failure.

In Mexico, each age group seems to live trapped in a different reality, with no bridges connecting them and no policies recognizing them as part of the same national project. What should be a chain of intergenerational development has turned into a sequence of

abandonment: children who survive, young people who stagnate, adults who wear out and the elderly who are cast aside. This disconnection not only fragments the present but compromises every possible future. The analysis begins where continuity was broken.

Finally, the results of the ENIGH 2025, far from dispelling doubts, confirm that social mobility in Mexico is caught between the fragility of its structural engines and the daily vulnerability of millions of people.



Image: "Three thousand million pesos represents the payroll to the Nation's servants" en <https://buzos.com.mx/noticia/tres-mil-millones-de-pesos-re-presenta-el-pago-a-siervos-de-la-nacion>

Although individual effort continues to be the main support for households, its transformative capacity is nullified by a context of economic stagnation, labor precariousness and a weakened institutional system. Added to this is the terrible insecurity that cuts across the country, which not only limits the full exercise of rights and investment in human capital, but also erodes social cohesion and restricts development opportunities in vast territories. The data on poverty reduction reflected in official figures contrasts with this reality, where inequality, violence and exclusion persist as dominant forces. Consequently, prosperity in Mexico remains a fragile and unequal horizon: attainable for a few, but increasingly distant for the majority. Only through evidence-based public policies, accompanied by strong institutions and an effective strategy to confront insecurity, will it be possible to reactivate the engines of social mobility as true mechanisms of inclusion and cohesion.

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2 PRECONDITIONS of SOCIAL MOBILITY



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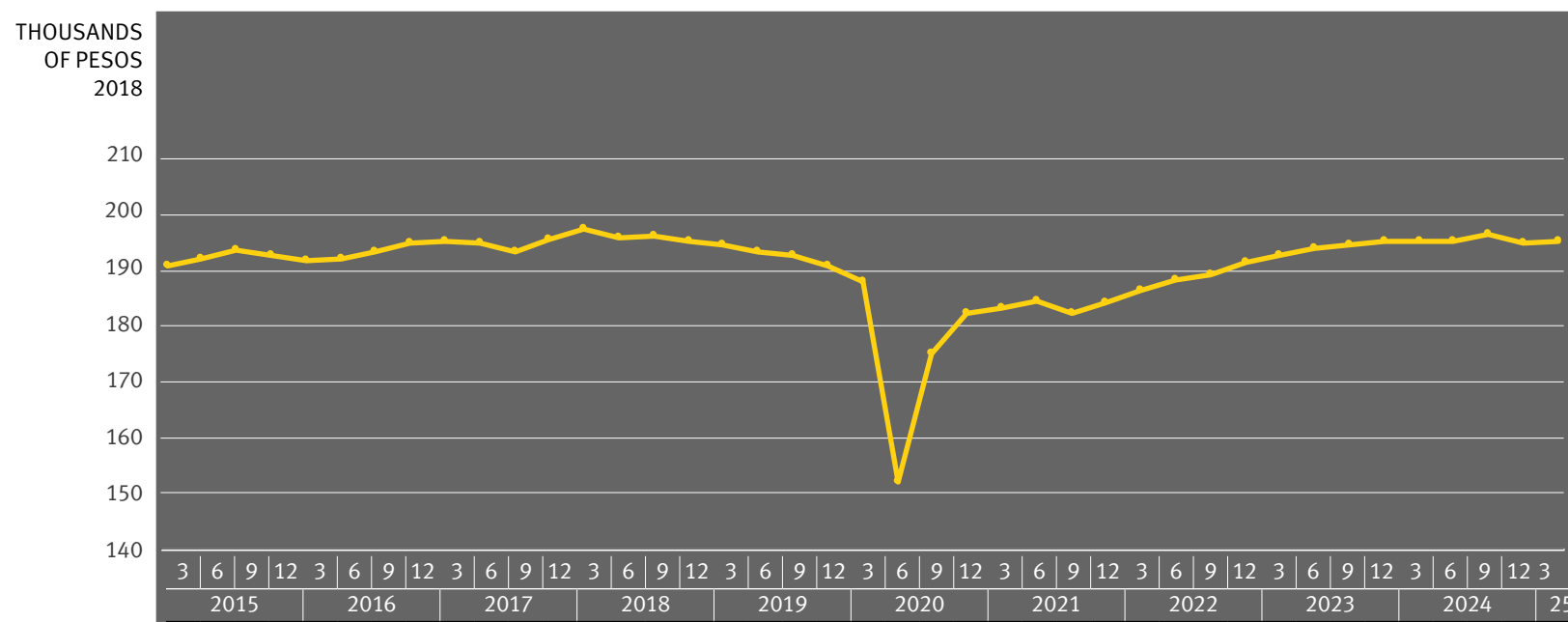
1 INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Over the past 30 years, Mexico's economy has shown moderate growth, albeit with significant fluctuations due to the political, social and economic conditions that have characterized different stages of the country. Between 1993 and 2024, the average annual growth rate was 2% (INEGI, 2025a). However, the period between 2018 and 2024 was marked by the lowest growth rate since the implementation of the USMCA (formerly NAFTA). During this period, average annual growth barely reached 0.86% (INEGI, 2025a). As an example of this slowdown, between the last

quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2025, GDP per capita increased from 195,088.5 to 195,103.7 Mexican pesos, a very modest increase of just 15 pesos and 20 cents, equivalent to a growth of only 0.008%.

Growth has been heterogeneous at the regional level. Unlike the last 25 years, southern Mexico played a fundamental role in growth over the past six years. In fact, between 2018 and 2023, the south of the country accounted for 33.9% of total economic growth, surpassing the northern region, which contributed 30.1%. Among the states that stood out in this growth process were Oaxaca and Tabasco, whose cumula-

GRAPH 1. GDP PER CAPITA. LAST DECADE (MARCH 2015–MARCH 2025)
(SEASONALLY ADJUSTED SERIES)



Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2025a).

tive growth reached 16.6% and 38.5%, respectively, representing an average annual increase of 3.1% and 6.7% (INEGI, 2025i). This contrasts considerably with the average growth both states experienced between 1993 and 2018, when they barely achieved annual increases of 0.8% and 0.9%, respectively (INEGI, 2025i) (Graph 1).

Between 2018 and 2023, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the south grew by 304 billion pesos. Of this

figure, 62.4% (189.6 billion pesos) is explained by the boom in construction activity, which grew by 68.9% (INEGI, 2025i). This notable increase in construction was fundamental for industrial activity in the south to perform better than in other regions of the country, driven by the rise in public spending on infrastructure.

However, the increase in public investment spending also brought with it an even greater rise in public debt. Between December 2018 and May 2025, bud-

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getary physical investment reached 5.164 trillion pesos. At the same time, the Historical Balance of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirements (SHRFSP), which broadly measures public debt, increased by 7.1219 trillion pesos. Of this increase, 6.608 trillion corresponded to domestic debt and 669.5 billion to budgetary external debt. In contrast, non-budgetary public debt showed a reduction of –155.9 billion pesos (SHCP, 2025i).

This increase in public debt was a key factor in boosting aggregate demand during the second half of Lopez Obrador's administration, particularly through gross fixed capital formation (GFCF). Between the last quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2025, GFCF grew by 9.2% (503.1 billion pesos). However, this growth is attributable to private investment, which grew by 13% (619.4 billion pesos), while public investment declined by –16.7% (–116.3 billion pesos). The cumulative growth of public GFCF in this period was negative, with a decline of 1.9% (INEGI, 2025a)³. GFCF also contributed to growth in the construction sector. Between the last quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2025, this activity grew by 7.6%, surpassing the growth of the Mexican economy as a whole

³ Gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) is composed of private GFCF and public GFCF.



*Civil engineering works
accounted for 70.6% of this
growth:*

Maya Train

Dos Bocas Refinery

AIFA

Transistmic Train

Images:

Maya Train: [https://
hotelsotavento.info/los-
tramos-del-tren-maya/](https://hotelsotavento.info/los-tramos-del-tren-maya/)

Dos Bocas Refinery: [https://
www.onexpo.com.mx/
NOTICIAS/REDUCEN-META-
DE-PRODUCCION-DE-DOS-
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AIFA_2024_-_Pasillo_de_
salidas.](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e4/AIFA_2024_-_Pasillo_de_salidas.)

(INEGI, 2025c). Civil engineering works accounted for 70.6% of this growth. However, our analysis at Signos Vitales suggests that public GFCF may have been underestimated, while private GFCF may have been overestimated⁴.

Despite the increases in capital, the export sector has not improved in terms of manufacturing capacity. Between 2018 and 2024, export volume grew by 14.5%, with non-oil exports standing out with growth of 16.7%. The manufacturing sector was the main engine of this growth, with non-automotive exports recording a cumulative increase of 21.9%. In addition, the prices of these exports rose by 15.8% (Banxico, n. d. a). Therefore, the increase in the total value of these exports was due to a combination of the increase in export volume, and to a lesser extent, the variation in unit prices.

Despite these challenges, the manufacturing sector continued to grow, particularly through exports. Growth in the value added of manufactured exports has been achieved mainly through greater use of imported inputs and rising wages in the sector. Be-

tween 2018 and 2023, manufactured exports grew by 1.1147 trillion pesos (19%), driven by the increase in the use of imported goods (793.8 billion pesos) and the increase in wages (303.6 billion pesos or 20.9%) (INEGI, 2024k). By contrast, the tourism industry (export of services) did not experience substantial growth. Between 2018 and 2024, the number of international tourists arriving in Mexico by air increased by 3.8 million (19.6%), but outbound tourism from Mexico grew by 34.7% (1.95 million). In the first months of 2025, revenues from international tourism in Mexico fell by -3% (-311.4 thousand tourists) (Banxico, n. d. b).

Wages in the industrial sector also increased significantly, doubling over the last five years. Compensation rose from 387.6 to 778.1 billion pesos, with a cumulative increase of 100.8% (INEGI, 2024k). However, the use of domestic inputs grew by only 1.8% (17.3 billion pesos), which demonstrates a continued dependence on imported inputs in the industry.

There are two sources of resources (non-budgetary) that will provide some sustainability to growth: Infonavit funds and pension fund administrators (Afores), both of which will maintain their upward trend. As of June 2025, Afores accumulated 7.21 trillion pe-

There are two type of resources (non-budgetary) that will provide some sustainability to growth: Infonavit funds and pension fund administrators (Afores), both of which will maintain their upward trend. As of June 2025, Afores accumulated 7.21 trillion pesos and Infonavit's assets totaled 2.14 trillion pesos (Banxico, n.d.d).

⁴ For further details regarding distortions or anomalies in the information on economic aggregates, mainly in gross fixed capital formation (GFCF), see Mexican economy under review: <https://signosvitalesmexico.org/reporte-14/>

sos and Infonavit's assets totaled 2.14 trillion pesos⁵ (Banxico, n. d. d). By the end of the first quarter of 2025, both sources amounted to 26.1% of GDP. In the last quarter of 2018, they represented 17.2% of GDP.

Three events, two of them legal reforms, contributed to the increase in the stock of financial capital: the labor subcontracting reform, the sustained increase in the minimum wage, and the pension system reform. As a result of these changes, the wage bill or total worker income rose from contributing 24.7% to 30% of GDP between 2018 and 2024. During the same years, the growth in employee compensation was approximately 27.7% (or 1.66 trillion pesos in 2018 values)⁶ (INEGI, 2025l). In turn, the growth of formal labor income has driven the increase in the collection of employer-employee contributions for retirement and housing (Infonavit).

⁵ Although not considered here, the housing savings funds also include the assets of Fovissste, which amount to 271.191 billion pesos.

⁶ The growth of income for those who own a business (gross mixed income), such as entrepreneurs, was much more modest. This growth reflects the limitations and scope of labor policy in Mexico. Between 2018 and 2024, gross mixed income rose from contributing 21.5% to 22.1% of GDP. The cumulative variation over the same years was 7.7% (or 401.2242 billion pesos in 2018 values).



Image: Mexican workers at <https://buzos.com.mx/noticia/siete-de-cada-10-trabajadores-mexicanos-viven-con-estres-laboral>

Wages in the industrial sector also increased significantly, doubling over the last five years. Compensation rose from 387.6 to 778.1 billion pesos, with a cumulative increase of 100.8% (INEGI, 2024k).

The legal reforms and the rise in the minimum wage invigorated the labor market, mainly the formal sector. According to our estimates, between 2018 and 2024, 91.1% of the growth in the wage bill was explained by the increase in formal wages. Less than 9% of wage bill growth came from informal employment. Likewise, for the same years, the increase in the base salary for social security contributions explains approximately 60.3% of the growth in Infonavit's financial assets. The reforms had a considerable impact on the structure and composition of the formal labor market, but not necessarily on the informal market and the benefits did not reach both sectors equally.

There was ample room for improvement in minimum wages, which was politically and economically capitalized upon. In January 2019, the minimum wage in northern border states of Mexico was increased by 100%, while in the rest of the country the increase was 16.21%. Practically, the wage-earning population living in the north of the country doubled its income from one year to the next. However, inflation in Mexico's Northern Border Free Zone (ZLFN), associated with the wage increase, rose by 1.2% (Calderon, M., *et al.* 2024). In the same year, a reduction in the VAT (Value Added Tax) rate from 16% to 8% was applied. The VAT reduction ended up offsetting the wage increase and the net effect of both policies (halving VAT and raising the minimum wage by 100%) on inflation was a reduction of -1.37% (Calderon, M., *et al.* 2024). The increase in the minimum wage in the ZLFN was useful insofar as it captured the wages that workers were actually receiving (the 100% variation was already putting upward pressure on prices), while at the same time showing that wages could continue to rise in the rest of the country (they could double in nominal terms).

The most recent information suggests that the expansion of non-budgetary spending, namely Infonavit

savings, cushioned the decline in budgetary investment spending. Spending on the execution of Lopez Obrador's flagship projects slowed from the first quarter of 2024. Between December 2018 and September 2024, non-residential construction grew by 30%. From September 2024 to May 2025 (under the Claudia Sheinbaum administration), non-residential construction registered a variation of -10.7% (INEGI, 2025a). Residential construction behaved in the opposite direction: between December 2018 and September 2024, residential construction fell by -6.6%, but between September 2024 and May 2025 growth reached 7.1% (INEGI, 2025a).

The decline in non-residential construction had a heterogeneous impact. The burden fell on the South, and strictly speaking, this region is in recession⁷. The fall in economic activity in the South affected overall national economic activity. In turn, the contraction in public sector investment spending dragged down the importation of transport equipment, machinery and other capital goods. At the time, construction of the Maya Train was accompanied by a boom in the importation of transport equipment. Between December 2018 and

⁷ In Mexico, measurements of economic cycles are not conducted at the regional level; however, following the criterion of more than two periods (quarters) with declines in output, the South of the country falls into this classification.

September 2024, this type of investment grew by 74.5% (INEGI, 2025a). This component of fixed investment was the fastest growing during Lopez Obrador's administration. However, between September 2024 and May 2025, investment in imported transport equipment fell by -17.3% (INEGI, 2025a).

Housing construction is cushioning the decline in public sector works. In the last year, building activity grew by 6.9% annually and, for the first time, surpassed the level observed in 2018 (a variation of 2.3%) (INEGI, 2025c). Unlike this activity, the construction of civil engineering works, related to public works, registered an annual contraction of -8.7% (INEGI, 2025c). By the end of 2024, 69.9% of construction activity was explained by housing construction (INEGI, 2025c).

According to our projections, in an optimistic scenario and with the exhaustive use of Infonavit resources, the increase in housing construction will offset the contraction in budgetary public investment and subsequently stimulate growth in gross fixed capital formation (private). In 2025, gross fixed capital formation will decline between -5% and -6%. Were it not for housing construction, investment would fall between -6% and -7%. Similarly, should the execution of various passenger train projects material-



Image: Mabe will achieve greater marketing of white goods thanks to the integration. (Bloomberg/Oliver Bunic) en www.bloomberglinea.com/2021/12/17/la-mexicana-mabe-anuncio-su-integracion-con-una-empresa-cordobesa/

ize—financed with domestic public debt—the Claudia Sheinbaum administration will follow the same formula as its predecessor, combined with the expansion of housing construction.

Mexico's economic structure has changed substantially. The latest Economic Censuses (2024) show that the share of manufacturing and commerce (retail and wholesale) will have greater incidence on production: between 2018 and 2023, manufacturing increased from contributing 32% to 34.3% of gross census val-

Should the execution of various passenger train projects materialize—financed with domestic public debt— the Claudia Sheinbaum administration will follow the same formula as its predecessor, combined with the expansion of housing construction.

ue added, and commerce rose from 21.4% to 23.5% of the total (INEGI, 2025d). By contrast, services and mining have reduced their share in the economy, falling from 20.8% to 17.4% and from 9.5% to 7% of gross census value added (INEGI, 2025d), respectively. These changes are largely the result of the labor subcontracting reform (closure of firms dedicated to this service) and the depletion of major oil fields.

The implications for the economy of a reduced role of oil activity and labor subcontracting will be profound. Thus, by 2028 we expect a substantial change in the trajectory of economic growth. In 2028, and as a result of the change in the base year (2023 replacing 2018), some phenomena that currently affect the economy will have less incidence. A clear example is the effect of the statistical drop in economic activity caused by the labor subcontracting reform: between 2018 and 2024, business support services contracted by -74.2% (or -577,958.7 million pesos) (INEGI, 2025d). The loss is equivalent to 2.3% of 2024 GDP. Between 2018 and 2024, Mexican GDP grew 5.2%, but excluding subcontracting activity, the rest of the Mexican economy grew 7.9%.

Economic prospects moving forward are uncertain due to several factors, which do not foreshadow

strong GDP growth to expand opportunities for the entire population. The GDP of southern Mexico will continue to be penalized by reduced oil activity, but it may capitalize on the increase in refining volume when it occurs. Likewise, the drag caused by the decline in oil production, which will intensify in the next decade—especially in the south—will have a lesser impact than at present. The impact of declining oil extraction may be offset by the commissioning of the Dos Bocas Refinery (RDB). This translates into lower oil extraction (mining) but greater refining volume (manufacturing)⁸. In turn, by 2028 and assuming the RDB operates at maximum capacity, southern GDP will benefit and Pemex's financial results could improve through its industrial transformation or refining activities.

Manufacturing will become more relevant in economic activity, but its future performance remains uncertain. The review (renegotiation) of the USMCA in 2026 will have a considerable impact, insofar as the treaty prevails and provides legal certainty to investors, particularly in industries with high national content. If

⁸ The implications of the increase in refining capacity are explained in the Signos Vitales report "*Mexican Economy under revision*." Among these implications, it is noteworthy that Mexico will shift from being an exporter to a net importer of oil, mainly light crude.

the treaty is preserved and favorable conditions are maintained compared to other countries, even without an increase in production, there will be positive effects on GDP measurement toward 2028.

International tourism and global tensions may add to growth, but infrastructure limitations will ultimately subtract from it. The Mexican economy could be boosted by an increase in tourism, mainly international, in the summer of 2026 due to the FIFA World Cup. According to international experience, hosting a World Cup can add 1.1% of value added to GDP (Bibolov, A., *et al.* 2024), as was the case in the 2002 and 2022 World Cups (Qatar), the first of which was a tournament with two host countries (South Korea and Japan). However, it is already too late for federal public sector intervention to improve infrastructure.

In 2025, economic growth will remain weak (between 0.5% and 0.8%), but results could be encouraging by 2028 (close to 4%). Some analysts suggest growth could be around 2% for 2026 and 2027. In 2028, GDP will undergo a significant quantitative jump as a result of the change in the GDP base year, which could add between five-tenths and one percentage point to inertial growth. Optimistically, growth in 2028 is estimated to be between 3% and 4%, but from 2029 to

THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF MEXICO HAS CHANGED:

MANUFACTURING AND COMMERCE:
GREATER INCIDENCE

SERVICES AND MINING: REDUCED
PARTICIPATION

IMPLICATIONS: DROP IN ECONOMIC
ACTIVITY CAUSED BY THE LABOR
SUBCONTRACTING REFORM; THE LOSS IS
EQUIVALENT TO 2.3% OF 2024 GDP.

The review (renegotiation) of the USMCA in 2026 will have a considerable impact, insofar as the treaty prevails and provides legal certainty to investors, particularly in industries with high national content.

2030, the Mexican economy is expected to return to its long-term path (2% over the last three decades).

Microeconomic and macroeconomic statistics indicate that the Mexican economy is very likely larger than what GDP measurement suggests. GDP is being underestimated for several reasons, one of which is recent structural changes that will only become evident by 2028. For example, one of the changes not yet clearly observed is the expansion of the private health sector. Another example, reiterated by Signos Vitales, is the growth of undeclared economic activity, such

as criminal enterprises and the participation of the armed forces in civilian tasks such as construction.

The gap between declared economic activity and revenues obtained from criminal operations is significant. In early 2024, we estimated —using the demand for and use of cash in Mexico— that the shadow economy represented 14.1% of GDP (Signos Vitales, 2024a). Recent estimates, which also use money demand, show that in the same year unrecorded value added could have reached 17.9% of Mexico's GDP (Ernst & Young, 2025). In this sense, what the recent labor market reforms achieved was to capture part of this shadow economy and the fight against tax evasion, but not money laundering.

At Signos Vitales we have pointed out tangible examples of the underestimation of economic activity and its relationship with the growth of criminal enterprises. Most alarming is that such phenomena could hardly have materialized without the cooperation—through omission or commission—of the authorities:

1. The market power of fossil fuel smugglers in Mexico, Pemex's main competitors, and the expansion of illegal fossil fuel extraction.
2. Distortions in the current account as a result of technical smuggling and misinvoicing. The clearest example is the so-called huachicol fiscal.



Images:

"Mexico, 4th place in piracy and smuggling" at <https://www.am.com.mx/news/2019/4/22/mexico-es-el-cuarto-lugar-en-el-mundo-en-pirateria-contrabando-381885.html>.

"Mexico depends on gas from the USA" at <https://www.revistasinrecreo.com/politica/mexico-depende-del-gas-natural-de-estados-unidos/>

"Insecurity in Sinaloa has cost 3.5% of the GDP" /Photo:Cuartoscuro/ Jose Betanzos Zarate en <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/inseguridad-sinaloa-costado-3-5-pib-es-tatal-20241204-736850.html>

3. The accelerated growth of remittances and their introduction into the Mexican financial system. The results of the ENIGH 2024 reveal massive under-reporting of remittances, since households report only 7.8% of the total. By the end of 2024, 50% of transfers (by amount) had been deposited into bank accounts.
4. Related to the above, the growth in Mexicans' financial savings amounts to billions (well above GDP), and a large portion of these savings was used to acquire public debt through the Cetesdirecto platform, brokerage houses, and investment funds.
5. As we forecasted since mid-2022, extortion reached unprecedented levels. Local criminal networks or larger organizations have created a parallel taxation system.
6. In 2023, organized crime obtained record profits. Criminals are dominant players in various businesses, such as drug and human trafficking.

In the short term, the main risks for the Mexican economy are not strictly economic: with institutional weakening accompanied by lax financial oversight, smuggling remains a persistent and growing problem; the electricity industry faces various constraints

throughout the value chain (generation, distribution and transmission) and remains highly dependent on natural gas supply; and the performance of the newly elected Federal Judiciary is yet to be seen. Rising violence in various regions of the country has repercussions. Between the second quarter of 2024 and the last quarter of the same year, the state of Sinaloa lost -5.4% of its GDP (INEGI, 2025e).

We consider that the greatest macro-financial risk in the short and medium term is the likely tightening of sanctions on the Mexican financial system by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the impact of the USMCA review. Toward the last quarter of 2025, increased scrutiny by U.S. authorities will be accompanied by the first results of investigations into international transfers in various postal codes along the U.S. southern border. In the medium and long term, the unfeasibility of the oil refining business and the internalization of Pemex's debt into public finances, the accelerated aging of the labor force, and demographic change will pose challenges to the country's economic and financial stability.

In summary, although some sectors and regions have achieved significant progress, the engine of social mobility and prosperity in Mexico remains

The greatest macro-financial risk in the short and medium term is the likely tightening of sanctions on the Mexican financial system by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the impact of the USMCA review.

fragile and dependent on the financial capacity of the Mexican State. A low rate of return from social investment projects such as the Maya Train, the Dos Bocas Refinery (RDB), and the Felipe Angeles International Airport (AIFA) perpetuates the disparity between the south and the rest of the country. Economic growth is dependent on domestic debt and consumes domestic savings. In this regard, pension and labor subcontracting reforms, accompanied by increases in the minimum wage, have contributed to the rise in domestic savings.

Private investment is insufficient, and the investment that has recently been added comes almost entirely from workers' savings, which by nature is private. The business environment in Mexico is uncertain, and there are no clear signs that the country may receive a greater flow of investment. Opportunities for Mexicans will remain limited as long as the necessary sources of employment—where most of the income of individuals and families originates—are not generated.

The structure of the Mexican economy has changed considerably. Future economic prospects could be favorable as long as the structural problems of the Mexican economy are addressed, such as the pene-

tration of organized crime into the economy, the low national content—stemming from intermediate inputs—in export goods, corruption and bottlenecks in the electricity sector.

THE ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES COULD BE FAVOURABLE ONLY IF ARE ADDRESSED:

- » **THE PENETRATION OF ORGANIZED CRIME INTO THE ECONOMY,**
- » **THE LOW NATIONAL CONTENT, STEMMING FROM INTERMEDIATE INPUTS, IN EXPORT GOODS,**
- » **THE CORRUPTION AND BOTTLENECKS IN THE ELECTRICITY SECTOR.**

2 POVERTY, HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Within the preconditions for social mobility, the circumstances and environment in which a person is born and raised determine their potential, growth, and development. In Mexico, it has been documented over time how different circumstances shape and define part of a person's destiny. By addressing these three major areas—poverty, health and education—this section seeks to identify the barriers that individuals face from the moment they are born and throughout different stages of life. As highlighted in various reports by Signos Vitales, Mexico is an unequal country with high levels of poverty and few opportunities. Among our findings, we have observed that the opportunities available to people are constrained by poverty, low educational quality, limited employment opportunities, gender gaps and precarious conditions associated with Mexico's structural problems.

To date, in the country, only 27 out of every 100 people are considered neither poor nor vulnerable; the top 10% of income earners make up to 14 times more than the poorest 10%; 64.7 million people are vulnerable due to lack of access to social security; more than 50 million due to lack of access to health services; and 23.4 million people continue to lack ac-

cess to nutritious and quality food (Coneval, 2023; INEGI, 2023a; INEGI, 2025k). This scenario evidences the widespread violation of social rights. Growth and higher income alone are not sufficient, since the persistence of poverty is tied to the behavior of inequality (Casas, 2019). Inequality is not limited to individuals' purchasing power but also affects access to basic services such as healthcare, education, water, and sanitation—in other words, elements that can restrict human rights through discrimination, abuse, and/or lack of justice. The premises that oppose equal opportunity in Mexico are diverse and complex, with some of the most significant including:

1. **POVERTY:** In Mexico, poverty is inherited; a person's background significantly influences their access to opportunities. Low social mobility is largely explained by high inequality of opportunity and by family conditions at birth (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025). Life outcomes in terms of education and income depend both on factors under individual control (degree of effort) and on factors beyond individual control (circumstances). In this sense, at least 48% of differences in life outcomes (education, wealth, income and economic resources) are due to unequal opportunities (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

The circumstances and environment in which a person is born and raised determine their potential, growth, and development.

2. ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES: Health is fundamental to well-being and development. Lack of access to adequate health services can hinder individuals' ability to work and study, and barriers are present from the earliest stages of life. In Mexico, although the right to health is enshrined in the Constitution, it is not a reality. Barriers are evident from childhood. Practically one in two children under one year of age does not have a complete vaccination schedule, which will have consequences later on (Shamah *et al.* 2024). Furthermore, between 2016 and 2024, significant increases were recorded in lack of access to health services among the youngest population: in 2024, for the 6–11 age group this deficiency was 25 percentage points (pp) higher than in 2016; for children aged 0–5 it was 21.9 pp higher; and for those aged 12–17 it was 20.6 pp higher. Meanwhile, educational lag showed the greatest increase among young people aged 18–29 (11 pp in 2024 compared to 2016) (INEGI, 2025k). With the COVID–19 pandemic, more than 215,000 children and adolescents were orphaned and the crisis was marked not only by high mortality but also by premature mortality. Suicide cases among young people continue to increase and access to public services in adulthood is even more limited

when it comes to maternity and childcare services. To make matters worse, for older adults, the lack of access to healthcare is even more pronounced: the percentage of people over 65 without access to health services is 3.2 times higher than comparable figures from 2016 (8.8% vs. 28.5%).

3. EDUCATION: Parents' educational attainment significantly influences their children's educational opportunities. Evidence shows that 4 out of every 10 individuals born in households where parents completed only primary school do not surpass their parents' level of education. Thirty-six percent reach the end of secondary school, which is precisely the national average level of schooling. That is, practically 3 out of 4 people do not surpass the national average schooling level (completed secondary school). Moreover, lack of access to quality education can limit upward mobility opportunities (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

4. FAMILY INCOME: Low-income families face greater difficulties accessing resources that facilitate education and personal development, perpetuating cycles of poverty. According to the National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure (INEGI, 2025g), although current household income increased in 2024 (a real growth of 10.6%) compared

Lack of access to adequate health services can hinder individuals' ability to work and study, and barriers are present from the earliest stages of life.

to 2022, households with higher incomes earned 14 times more than those with lower incomes. Between 2022 and 2024, all income deciles registered real increases in labor income (first decile: real increase of 13.8%; tenth decile: 6.9%). This suggests a faster recovery of labor income among low-income households, possibly linked to increases in the minimum wage. Regarding non-labor income, transfers (scholarships, retirement benefits, pensions, remittances and social programs) carry the most weight: in the top 10% of households by income, contributory pensions—those derived from social security contributions—predominate (63%), while in the bottom 10% of households, income depends more heavily on social programs and donations (42% and 44% of total transfers, respectively) (INEGI, 2025a).

5. EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES: The availability of well-paid and stable jobs is crucial for social mobility. In the productive stage of life, for example, around 15.6 million young people live in poverty, exclusion and precariousness. Of these, 4.9 million are neither in school nor employed; 7.6 million are in precarious jobs; and 3.1 million are students living in income poverty. This results in labor precariousness and can limit the possibilities of im-

proving quality of life (Accion Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza, 2025).

6. SOCIAL AND FAMILY NETWORKS: Social connections can facilitate access to better educational and job opportunities, and even to mental health protection against addictions. The absence of these structures can be an obstacle to broader and better opportunities.
7. PUBLIC POLICIES: The effectiveness of social protection policies and programs supporting education and employment impacts social mobility. Insufficient policies can perpetuate inequalities.
8. DISCRIMINATION: Factors such as gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status can influence the opportunities available to certain groups, affecting their capacity for mobility.
9. GEOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS: Differences between urban and rural areas can influence access to basic services, education and employment, thus affecting the social mobility of people living in less advantaged regions.

All these preconditions, among others, shape life courses in particular ways. The analysis also explores the most affected regions (regional focus) and gender gaps. These interrelated conditions create a complex

Low-income families face greater difficulties accessing resources that facilitate education and personal development, perpetuating cycles of poverty.

The availability of well-paid and stable jobs is crucial for social mobility.

landscape that impacts individuals' ability to improve their economic and social situation in Mexico.

3 RULE OF LAW

The rule of law rests upon several fundamental pillars that ensure that all individuals—including authorities—are subject to the law. These principles are recognized both within the Mexican constitutional framework and in international standards: legality, equality before the law, separation of powers, effective access to justice, judicial independence and the protection of human rights, as well as transparency and accountability. When weakened, not only is the rule of law undermined, but consequently democracy, justice and ultimately equality of opportunity is also compromised.

In this sense, the rule of law is essential for the effective functioning of the engines of social mobility and prosperity in Mexico, as it guarantees equality before the law, legal certainty, and the protection of fundamental rights. Equality before the law ensures that all citizens enjoy the same legal opportunities, thereby paving the way for fair and accessible social mobility. Legal certainty, in turn, is fundamental for social mobility because it provides individuals with the confi-

dence to invest, undertake entrepreneurial activities or improve their living conditions. The protection of fundamental rights constitutes an essential pillar, as it creates the foundation for the personal and professional development of each individual. That said, without a solid and fair legal system—in other words, without a functional rule of law—the opportunities for development are limited, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. The engines of social mobility (education, employment, health) only operate effectively if they are supported by clear rules and reliable institutions. By contrast, impunity, corruption or discrimination affect those already at a social disadvantage (such as people with limited resources, women, Indigenous peoples or youth), creating further obstacles to improving their situation, as their access to education, health or employment is compromised. Additionally, trust in institutions meant to protect the population is weakened. This leads to the risk that people may resort to informal or illegal solutions, which represents yet another barrier to improving quality of life. In summary, a weak rule of law is not only a legal problem but also a structural barrier to social progress. Without clear, fair and impartially applied laws, people cannot improve their quality of life, and therefore, social mobility becomes an empty promise.

As analyzed in previous reports by Signos Vitales, the rule of law in Mexico has been weakened, particularly throughout the Lopez Obrador administration. In 2024, Mexico ranked 118th out of 142 in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, with a score of 0.41 out of 1, reflecting a steady decline since 2015. To this day, the rule of law in Mexico continues to face structural obstacles that directly impact the social mobility of the population at large. Among the main limitations are:

- I. Structural impunity,
- II. Corruption and lack of judicial independence,
- III. Territorial inequality,
- IV. Absence of comprehensive redress and
- V. Lack of a gender perspective.

These elements have a significant impact on social mobility because they result in the inability to defend rights, the exclusion of vulnerable groups, the normalization of violence or disincentives to invest or undertake entrepreneurial activities. Below, each structural problem and its effect on social mobility are discussed in greater detail.

I STRUCTURAL IMPUNITY

Impunity has represented one of the greatest risks to the rule of law in Mexico in recent years (Signos Vitales, 2024). In 2022, three out of ten people in Mexico were victims of a crime, yet only one out of every 384 victims received an adequate response from authorities. This means that only 0.26% received an appropriate institutional response (SCJN, 2024). A recent Human Rights Watch report confirms that impunity persists in 2025, noting that nine out of ten homicides in Mexico remain unsolved and it is estimated that only 1% of complaints make it before a judge (Human Rights Watch, 2025). Furthermore, between 2017 and 2024, oversight bodies initiated 3,350 investigations into possible administrative responsibilities, but only 281 cases (8.4%) resulted in effective sanctions (Rojas, 2025). This reflects both the inefficiency of the Mexican judicial system and a continued mistrust of the justice system.

At the same time, according to the National Census of Federal Justice Administration, in 2024 each judge resolved an average of 895 cases, highlighting a critical workload that undoubtedly compromised the quality of justice (INEGI, 2024). Regarding the Supreme Court, as of June 11, 2025, the SCJN reported having

1,248 unresolved cases, while federal courts and collegiate tribunals reported more than 1 million contentious cases (Badillo, 2025).

Both Lopez Obrador and Sheinbaum have blamed judges for the persistent impunity in Mexico, arguing for the need for judicial reform, which was approved in September 2024. In this supposed attempt to democratize the judicial system and thereby strengthen the rule of law, the reform included, among other measures, the popular election of judges, magistrates, and Supreme Court justices. Following the controversial June 2025 elections—whose illegality was rejected only by the INE and the Electoral Tribunal—it remains to be seen whether structural impunity will improve. However, several experts have warned that delays in justice and retrials could generate a spiral of impunity. For example, in criminal matters the principle of immediacy requires that the judge issuing the ruling be the same judge overseeing the entire trial. With the replacement of judges in 2025, experts warn of delays or even cancellations of trials, affecting individuals deprived of liberty awaiting trial. To put this into perspective, in April 2025, around 95,000 people were in prison awaiting sentencing (Badillo, 2025). Finally, the low citizen turnout in the June elections and subsequent risks of politicization suggest that the



Image: Assault in collective taxi at Naucalpan, 2024 at <https://www.reforma.com/captan-asalto-a-pasajeros-en-combi-de-naucalpan/ar2866590>

changes promoted by the Morena governments have neither increased public trust in the judicial system nor improved the system itself.

II CORRUPTION AND LACK OF JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Closely related to the above, corruption and the lack of judicial independence have been decisive factors in Mexico's poor performance regarding the rule of law. According to the 2024 National Survey on Victimization and Perceptions of Public Security (Envipe), 53.6% of the population perceived judges as corrupt, and only 20.4% expressed "a lot" or "some" trust in them (INEGI, 2024b). Likewise, Envipe data estimates that the "dark figure"—the proportion of crimes unreported—hovers around 93%. This is attributed to distrust in authorities, slow processes, or inadequate treatment (SCJN, 2024). The Latinobarometro published in January 2025 that only 35 out of 100 people trust the judiciary "a lot" or "somewhat" (Latinobarometro, 2024). These data confirm that low trust in judicial impartiality persists, at least for the period spanning 2024 to early 2025.

Meanwhile, although the popular election of judges and magistrates was celebrated by the Sheinbaum

administration, international experts and media outlets warned that this process undermines judicial impartiality and will harm Mexico's already fragile rule of law. While no data yet exist on public perceptions following the June 1, 2025 elections, indications suggest that the proportion of Mexicans perceiving the judiciary as corrupt has not significantly changed. Several sources report that voter turnout on June 1 was barely 13%, which also suggests that Morena governments' efforts to transform the judiciary have not increased public trust. Moreover, reported irregularities during the election are unlikely to contribute to greater judicial independence in the future and may worsen citizen distrust.

Additionally, it is evident that the judicial reform has concentrated public power in the Executive, as shown in the June 1 elections. Fifty-six percent of elected circuit magistrates came from Executive proposals, and 29% from those nominated by the Legislature, both branches dominated by the ruling Morena party. Regarding the Supreme Court, all elected candidates appeared on the pro-government "accordion" list distributed to guide voting (De la Torre, 2025). Likewise, six of the new justices were nominated by the Executive committee, and three were members of the Court prior to the election, having been appointed by

former president Lopez Obrador (OAS, 2025). This, combined with the decline in professional quality of judges, the politicization of the judiciary, and the risk of organized crime involvement, has increased the likelihood of arbitrary justice and a greater lack of protection of individual rights.

Although no inclinations of the new judges can yet be observed, the election results challenge the exercise of civil liberties, as they create uncertainty about future judicial independence. In other words, the liberties and human rights integral to social development risk being compromised when judicial decisions could favor the Executive (or Legislature) to the detriment of citizens.

Finally, corruption has played a significant role both in perpetuating impunity and in undermining judicial independence. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Mexico dropped five points between 2023 and 2024, ranking 140th out of 180 countries (Transparency International, 2024). This aligns with INEGI 2023 data showing that 83% of the population considered corruption a frequent problem and six out of ten Mexicans acknowledged having been victims of corruption. Beyond representing a setback in combating corruption,



Images: "In Coronango low turnout in Mexico's first judicial election/Photo: Bibiana Díaz / El Sol de Puebla at <https://oem.com.mx/elsoldepuebla/local/desairan-las-elecciones-judiciales-en-las-cholulas-y-ocoyucan-23878187>

"Notes to guide the judiciary's vote" at <https://elpais.com/mexico/2025-05-30/los-acordeones-el-penultimo-dolor-de-cabeza-del-ine-ante-la-eleccion-judicial.html>

Judicial election:

Risk of organized crime involvement, has increased the likelihood of arbitrary justice and a greater lack of protection of individual rights.

In 2024 Mexico's ranking was 140th out of 180 countries (Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

the CPI also forecasts economic and social consequences, as the drop is directly associated with lost economic growth. CEEY reports that the decline in CPI between 2023 and 2024 has cost the economy nearly 500 billion pesos in lost GDP growth (approximately a 2% reduction in GDP growth) (De la Torre, 2025b).

Thus, it is evident that the persistence of corruption, together with impunity and lack of judicial independence, not only affects Mexico's performance on rule of law indicators but can also have negative effects on social development and undoubtedly jeopardize the general population.

III TERRITORIAL INEQUALITY

In addition to the above, access to justice varies drastically between states and municipalities, contributing further to overall inequality in the country. According to the Institute of Legal Research of UNAM, the southern and southeastern states present the greatest obstacles to accessing legal services. This is due, among other factors, to the institutional density of the judicial system. As shown in Graph 2, the number of public defenders and the presence of courts and prosecutors' offices are significantly lower than in states such as Mexico City,

THE NEW JUDICIAL POWER

POLITIZATION OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

RISK OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF ORGANIZED CRIME

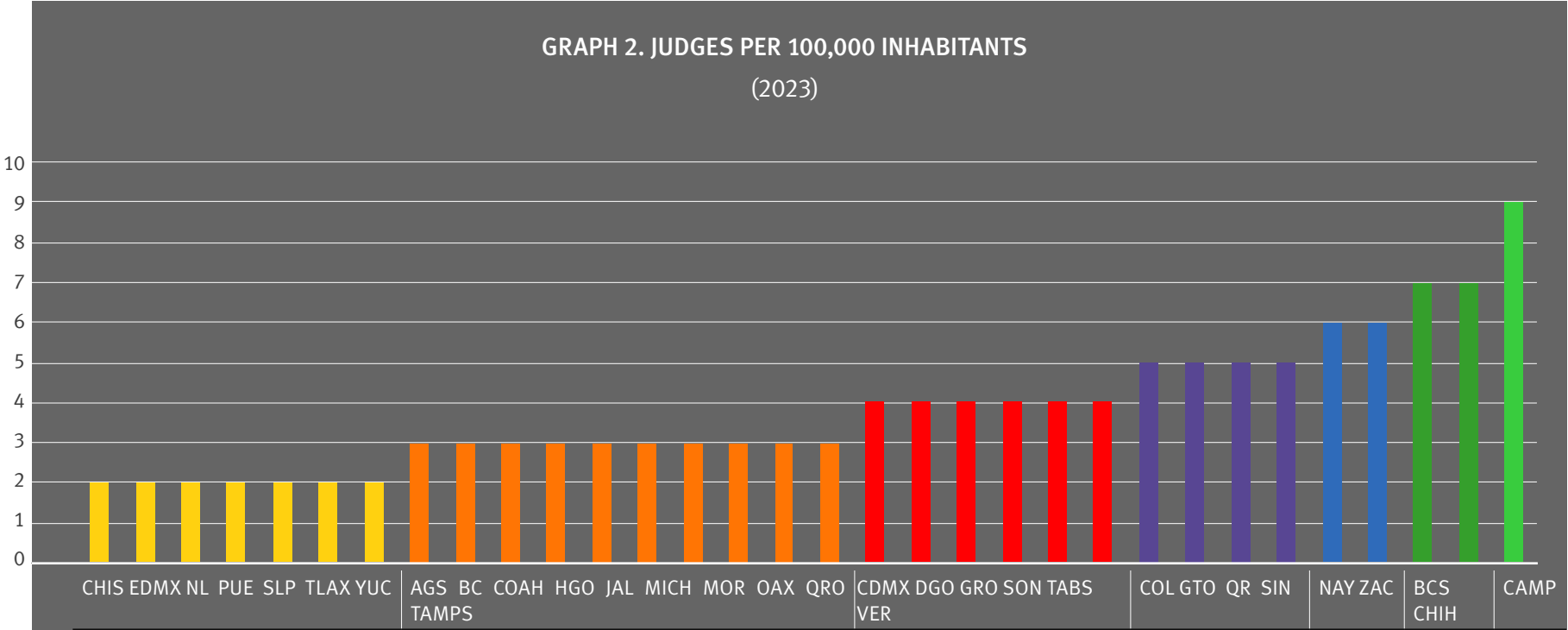
THE JUDICIAL POWER IS COMPOSED BY:

- » THREE MINISTERS ASSIGNED BY LOPEZ OBRADOR
- » ALL THE ELECTED MAGISTRATES WERE REGISTERED IN THE OFFICIAL NOTE TO GUIDE VOTERS ("ACORDEON").
- » DROP OF THE PROFICIENCY QUALITY OF THE JUDGES

Nuevo Leon and Jalisco, where more judicial resources, trained personnel, and specialized services are concentrated. Regarding the number of judges, disparities are even more evident: while globally the average number of judges per 100,000 inhabitants is 17.83, in Mexico the average number of state judges per 100,000 inhabitants is three. Looking at specific states, contrasts become even clearer: while Campeche has nine judges per 100,000 inhabitants,

Chiapas, Nuevo Leon and the State of Mexico each have only two (SNIEG, 2023). This results in a large number of individuals imprisoned without having received sentencing or trial. Moreover, these realities create a significant territorial gap and foster problems in accessing justice (Graph 2).

At the municipal level, territorial inequality becomes even more evident. In a report published in September 2024, the Federal Judiciary Council, together with



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

the Supreme Court, noted that only 1 in 10 municipalities has a courthouse or a Public Prosecutor's Office. In addition, in more than 60% of rural municipalities, individuals must travel more than 2 hours to file a complaint or receive legal advice (SCJN, 2024). At the same time, local judiciaries provide their services with a smaller budget than the Federal Judiciary, despite handling more cases and having fewer personnel. In 2023 alone, 3.6% of the investigations initiated in the country were handled by the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (FGR), while local prosecutors' offices dealt with 96.4% of cases. While the FGR had a budget of 19,333,372,000 pesos, local prosecutors' offices received a total of 50,170,441,000 pesos (Chamber of Deputies, 2024), clearly indicating a disproportionate allocation between the number of cases and the budget available. This budgetary insufficiency has undoubtedly fostered territorial inequality, thus affecting the population's access to justice.

IV ABSENCE OF COMPREHENSIVE REPARATION

Another variable that plays a decisive role in the quality of the rule of law in a country is comprehensive reparation, or in Mexico's case, its absence. Comprehensive reparation is a right of victims of human rights violations or crimes and it seeks to restore their

DISPARITY IN THE NUMBER OF JUDGES

- » AVERAGE JUDGES PER 100,000 INHABITANTS SHOULD BE OF 17.83.
- » IN MEXICO THE AVERAGE STATE JUDGES PER 100,000 INHABITANTS IS 3.
- » IN CAMPECHE THERE ARE 9 JUDGES PER 100,000 INHABITANTS
- » IN CHIAPAS, NUEVO LEON AND THE STATE OF MÉXICO THERE ARE ONLY 2 (SNIEG, 2023)

ONLY 1 IN 10 MUNICIPALITIES HAS A COURTHOUSE OR A PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE (CJF, 2024).

IN MORE THAN 60% OF RURAL MUNICIPALITIES, PEOPLE MUST TRAVEL MORE THAN 2 HOURS TO FILE A COMPLAINT OR RECEIVE LEGAL ADVICE (SCJN, 2024).

dignity and living conditions prior to the harm suffered. It is not limited to financial compensation, but rather encompasses a set of measures that address the harm in its entirety: restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition. This right is legally grounded in the Mexican Constitution, the General Victims Law, as well as in various international treaties (CDHCM, 2025)⁹.

According to both the Mexican legal framework and international treaties, reparation must be:

- » Adequate, effective, and proportional to the harm caused.
- » Comprehensive and differentiated, considering the circumstances of each victim.
- » Timely and guaranteed by the State.

According to the National Victims Registry (Renavi), in the first quarter of 2025 a total of 7,349 registration applications were received (by jurisdiction: 6,615 at

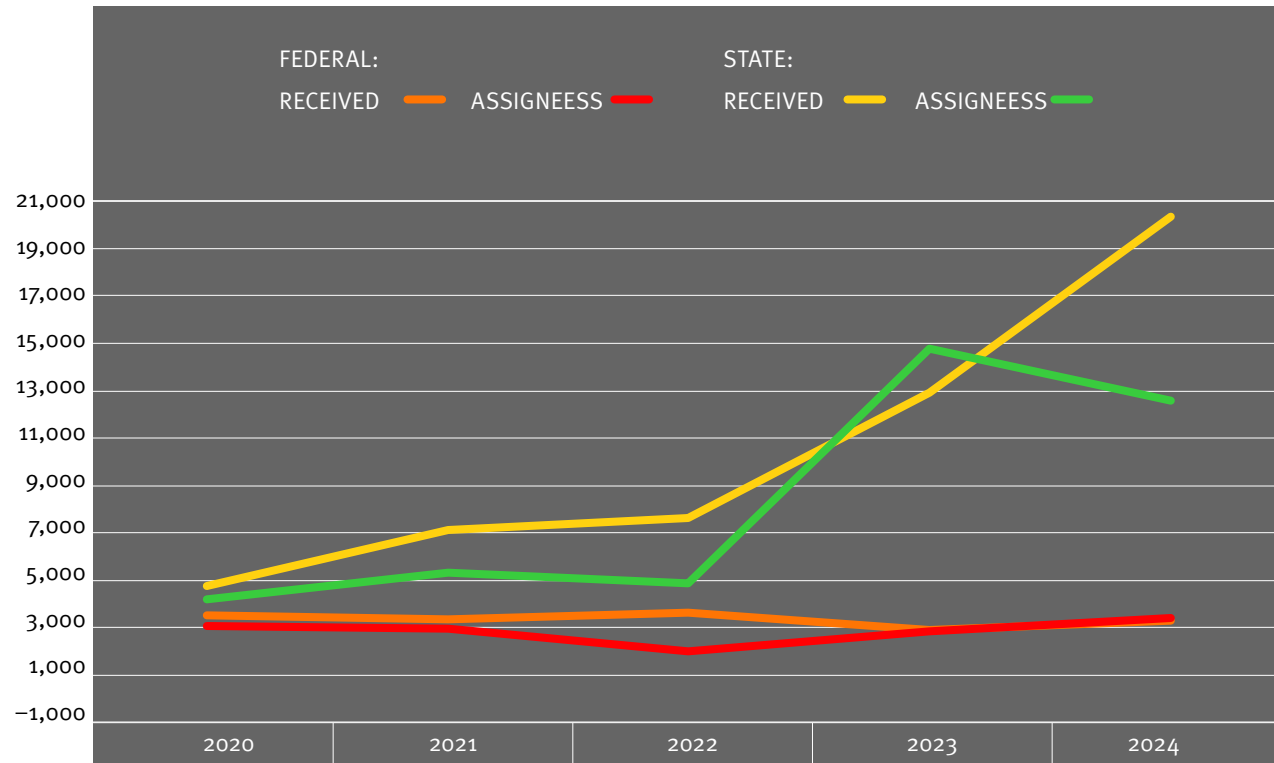
the state level and 734 at the federal level). Of these, 4,317 were effectively entered into the registry and qualify for reparations (3,694 at the state level and 623 at the federal level) (CEAV, 2025). By comparison, during the same period in 2024, 4,149 registration applications were received (by jurisdiction: 3,444 at the state level and 705 at the federal level), of which only 942 were admitted into the registry (133 at the state level and 809 at the federal level) (CEAV, 2025b). On an annual comparison, it is noteworthy that the number of Renavi registration applications increased in 2024 by 57.09% at the state level and 12.92% at the federal level compared to 2023. However, at the federal level it was the second-lowest number reported since 2020 (Graph 3)

According to the General Law of Victims, Renavi analyzes and evaluates the application. If the applicant meets the established criteria, the registration proceeds, at which point the person is assigned a record. In cases where there are multiple victims in a single application, once accepted, each one receives an individual record in Renavi.

That said, in terms of reparations, the Executive Commission for Victim Assistance (CEAV) reports in its 2025 progress on targets that it exceeded its

⁹ Article 1 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States; Article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 63, Paragraph I of the American Convention on Human Rights; Paragraph 20 of the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right of Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law to a Remedy and Reparation.

GRAPH 3. NUMBER OF RECORDS RECEIVED AND ASSIGNED IN RENA VI 2020–2024
BY STATE AND FEDERAL LEVEL



Source: CEAV (2025;2025b).

quarterly goal both in the number of supports processed (883 with a target of 600) and in the number of determinations issued and subsidiary compensations (148 with a target of 113) (CEAV, 2025b). However, the available reports do not break down or specify how many victims have received all the mea-

The Executive Commission for Victim Assistance reports that it exceeded its quarterly goal both in the processed supports and in the number of determinations issued and subsidiary compensations (CEAV, 2025b).

Reports do not specify how many victims received all the measures of comprehensive repair.

sures of comprehensive reparation. Several studies indicate that most victims admitted to Renavi only receive partial measures (i.e., financial support or basic medical care), while satisfaction measures and guarantees of non-repetition are less common. This undoubtedly reflects a significant gap between the legal framework and its practical implementation. In addition, victims often face slow bureaucratic processes for registration and a lack of information about their rights, which has generated mistrust and discouragement in registering or continuing with the procedures.

Therefore, there is a need to create mechanisms that not only allow equitable access to legal resources but also generate incentives for compliance with rights. In line with this, victims' commissions at both the state and national levels should be able to impose administrative sanctions in cases of noncompliance with the law.

V LACK OF A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Laws and reforms have been promoted at the federal and state levels to foster equality and prevent violence against women, such as the General Law for Equality between Women and Men and the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence. Likewise, President Sheinbaum, from the beginning of her administration, has pushed for several constitutional reforms and secondary laws to achieve gender equality in Mexico. It is important to highlight that within the framework of gender equality, the concept of "gender perspective" is an essential component.

That said, although the gender perspective has constitutional foundations and Mexico has a protocol for judging with a gender perspective that obliges judges to apply it¹⁰, the data available to date show that the lack of a gender perspective persists, particularly in matters such as access to justice and equality before the law, thereby compromising the rights and social mobility of women in Mexico.

¹⁰ The SCJN developed the protocol for adjudicating with a gender perspective, which serves as a guide for judges and led to the issuance of binding criteria. See: https://www.scjn.gob.mx/derechos-humanos/sites/default/files/protocolos/archivos/2022-01/Protocolo%20para%20juzgar%20con%20perspectiva%20de%20genero_2022.pdf

While national records report that between 2015 and April 2025, 34,715 women have been murdered, other statistics indicate that only 24.6% of homicides are investigated as femicides (OCNF, 2025). In addition, the National Citizen Observatory on Femicide highlights in its latest report that while SESNSP maintains statistics that aim to incorporate a gender perspective, these databases do not provide disaggregated information about the victims, such as sociodemographic data, legal status, or information related to indigenous or migrant status, among others. Similarly, the National Database and Information System on Cases of Violence against Women (Banavim) is not updated regularly, and the number of protection orders reported by the states does not correspond with the number of complaints filed by women. The lack of reliable information on women not only prevents an accurate understanding of their reality but also limits the design of effective public policies to improve their living conditions, hinders the engines of social mobility and obstructs the path toward greater prosperity in the country.

Regarding access to justice, the lack of a gender perspective continues to impair the administration of justice. According to data from the World Justice Project, only 45% of the population in Mexico believes

Between 2015 and April 2025, 34,715 women have been murdered.

» *low rate of complaints by women: fear of reprisals, lack of information about their rights and lack of trust in the judicial system (INEGI, 2022a).*

» *the resources still seem insufficient to guarantee substantive equality.*



Image: Names of murdered women in Mexico at <https://elpais.com/mexico/2021-06-28/los-feminicidios-en-mexico-aumentan-un-71-en-los-cinco-primeros-meses-de-2021.html>

that justice institutions do not discriminate based on gender (World Justice Project, 2022). Furthermore, several experts have noted a lack of judicial training that undermines the delivery of justice: many judges fail to apply either the national protocol or international human rights standards with a gender perspective, resulting in greater impunity and revictimization. This is also related to the low rate of complaints by women. According to data from the National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships (ENDIREH) conducted by INEGI, in 2021, 89.22% of women did not report violent incidents or request institutional support (INEGI, 2022a). The main reasons cited by women included fear of reprisals, lack of information about their rights and lack of trust in the judicial system (INEGI, 2022a). It is also important to add here that the lack of a gender perspective—or, in effect, gender inequality—also affects human rights defenders. According to the 2022 Mesoamerican Registry of Aggressions against Women Human Rights Defenders, the most common aggressions against women defending human rights were related to defending the right to information (35%) and the right to truth, justice, and reparation (14%) (IM-Defensoras, 2023).

Finally, several experts argue that to achieve substantive equality beyond the legal framework, the

recognition of rights must be accompanied by a redistribution of resources. Looking at the 2025 Federal Expenditure Budget (PEF), it can be observed that the government has an approved budget of 479.2484 billion pesos for equality and gender perspective, representing a 9.6% increase compared to the 2024 PEF. In addition, another 29.479 billion pesos were approved with own-source resources, reaching a total of 508.7274 billion pesos (CIEP, 2025). However, upon closer examination, more than 50% of these resources were allocated to pensions. This suggests that despite the increase in budget, the resources still seem insufficient to guarantee substantive equality, as the direct transfer of resources does not transform the lack of a gender perspective in different areas nor address structural inequality in general.

In summary, the gender perspective is not only an approach to addressing women's issues but also a fundamental tool for building a fairer rule of law that enables greater social mobility. Without a gender perspective, women's opportunities are affected, thereby undermining their potential for social mobility.

45% of the population in Mexico believes that justice institutions do not discriminate based on gender (World Justice Project, 2022)

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY IN MEXICO?

The analysis presented reveals that, despite some progress in specific sectors of the economy, Mexico's prospects for creating new opportunities are limited by the lack of investment and the absence of well-paid jobs. Mexico continues to face profound inequality that constrains social mobility and prosperity. Key engines of growth, such as poverty, education, health and access to justice, remain fundamental obstacles for a significant majority of the population. The country's economic system continues to be characterized by modest, unequal, and debt-dependent growth, coupled with scarce public investment in key sectors and it fails to generate sustainable conditions for improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable population. The lack of access to basic services, educational and labor barriers, and ongoing discrimination in various domains contribute to a deeply unequal structure that perpetuates poverty and limits opportunities for millions of Mexicans.

The persistent weakness of the rule of law and the lack of judicial independence further exacerbate this situation, creating an environment of impunity that undermines citizens' trust and obstructs access to

justice, with serious consequences for all but especially for the most vulnerable. Structural impunity, corruption and the lack of a gender perspective directly affect social mobility, as victims of violence and inequality do not receive the reparations to which they are entitled nor the necessary support to rebuild their lives.

In this context, it is essential to rethink the country's development model, ensuring that economic and social policy focuses on equity and inclusion, guaranteeing access to justice, quality education and health services for all. Without a comprehensive strengthening of the engines of social mobility, including economic growth and opportunities, it will be difficult for Mexico and its citizens to achieve shared prosperity.

Structural impunity, corruption and the lack of a gender perspective directly affect social mobility, as victims of violence and inequality do not receive the reparations to which they are entitled nor the necessary support to rebuild their lives.





**3 EARLY
CHILDHOOD**
0 to 5 years old

3 EARLY CHILDHOOD

« 0 to 5 years old

From birth, individuals can be placed on a trajectory of potential development; however, they do not choose their starting point. The outcomes of previous generations influence the starting points of a given generation, and their results, in turn, influence the next generation. In a society with equal opportunities, it would be expected that individuals have access to a minimum standard and to equal treatment before the law, while also recognizing circumstances beyond their control that truncate their trajectories (Velez & Monroy-Gomez-Franco, 2023).

In this chapter, we analyze the status of the engines of social mobility from the earliest stage of the life

course (early childhood). We describe what inequalities of resources, poverty, and access to services such as health and education are, and how they affect mobility in Mexico, explaining its low levels and how it is determined from the earliest stages of life. We find a panorama that suppresses opportunities from the outset and gradually worsens, further limiting future opportunities.

What is the situation faced by young children in early childhood in Mexico? Currently, there are 12.4 million children under six years of age; more than two million of them are at risk of not reaching their full potential. Practically half (41.9%) live in poverty and

There are 12.4 million children under six years of age; more than two million of them are at risk of not reaching their full potential. Practically half (41.9%) live in poverty and lack access to health services (37.7%) (INEGI, 2025k).

lack access to health services (37.7%) (INEGI, 2025k), and nearly half of the youngest children (under one year of age) have not completed the basic vaccination schedule (Shamah *et al.* 2024). All of this is reflected in a worrisome increase in infant and maternal mortality, which urgently influences and determines the next stage of life.



Image: "In Mexico more than a third of the population in poverty son niños" en <https://elheraldodesaltillo.mx/2021/12/08/en-mexico-mas-de-un-tercio-de-la-poblacion-en-pobreza-son-ninos-ocde/>

1 FEWER CHILDREN: MORE DISADVANTAGES (DEMOGRAPHICS)

Since 2011, Mexico has shown a clear downward trend in the number of recorded births, with more than a decade of uninterrupted negative growth rates. In 2010, 2,643.9 thousand births were registered, while in 2023 the figure decreased to 1,820.9 thousand. Thus, between 2010 and 2023, these records declined by -31.1% (a variation of -823 thousand registered births) (INEGI, 2024l).

Estimates from Conapo (National Population Council) align with administrative records. Between 2010 and 2023, the population under one year of age decreased from 2,337 thousand to 2,057.1 thousand people (Conapo, n. d.). This represents a reduction of -12% (-279.9 thousand children under one year). Likewise, these same estimates indicate that the Mexican population continues to grow at a slower pace than in the previous century. For 2025, the number of Mexicans under one year of age will be approximately 2,015.4 thousand, resulting in an accumulated decline of -321.6 thousand children under one year (Conapo, n. d.). It is estimated that by 2026 the population of Mexicans under one year of age will fall below two million, a phenomenon not seen since 1968.

This general trend applies to all regions of the country. The region most affected by the decline in births is the central region. Following this are the northwest and the south. Between 2010 and 2025, central Mexico will see a relative contraction in the population under one year of age of -19.2% (a variation of -167.4 thousand), while the northwest and the south will show variations of -15.8% (-25.7 thousand children) and -13.1% (-75.2 thousand children), respectively (Conapo, n. d.). The decline in these three regions accounts for 83.4% of the total variation. The north is the least affected region by this drop in births, with a variation of -5.2% (-19.7 thousand). This last decline represents 6.1% of the total (Conapo, n. d.) (Graph 4).

Until 2025, only the state of Nuevo Leon shows an upward trend in the population under one year of age. However, in the following two years this trend may come to a pause. In contrast to this state, Mexico City, the State of Mexico, and Veracruz show the most pronounced declines, both in relative and absolute terms. Between 2010 and 2025, these three states have experienced variations of -34.3% ($-49,000$), -25.3% ($-80,900$), and -27.6% ($-40,600$), respectively and together account for a loss of $-170,600$ children under one year of age, equivalent to 53% of the total national decline over the same period (Conapo, n. d.).

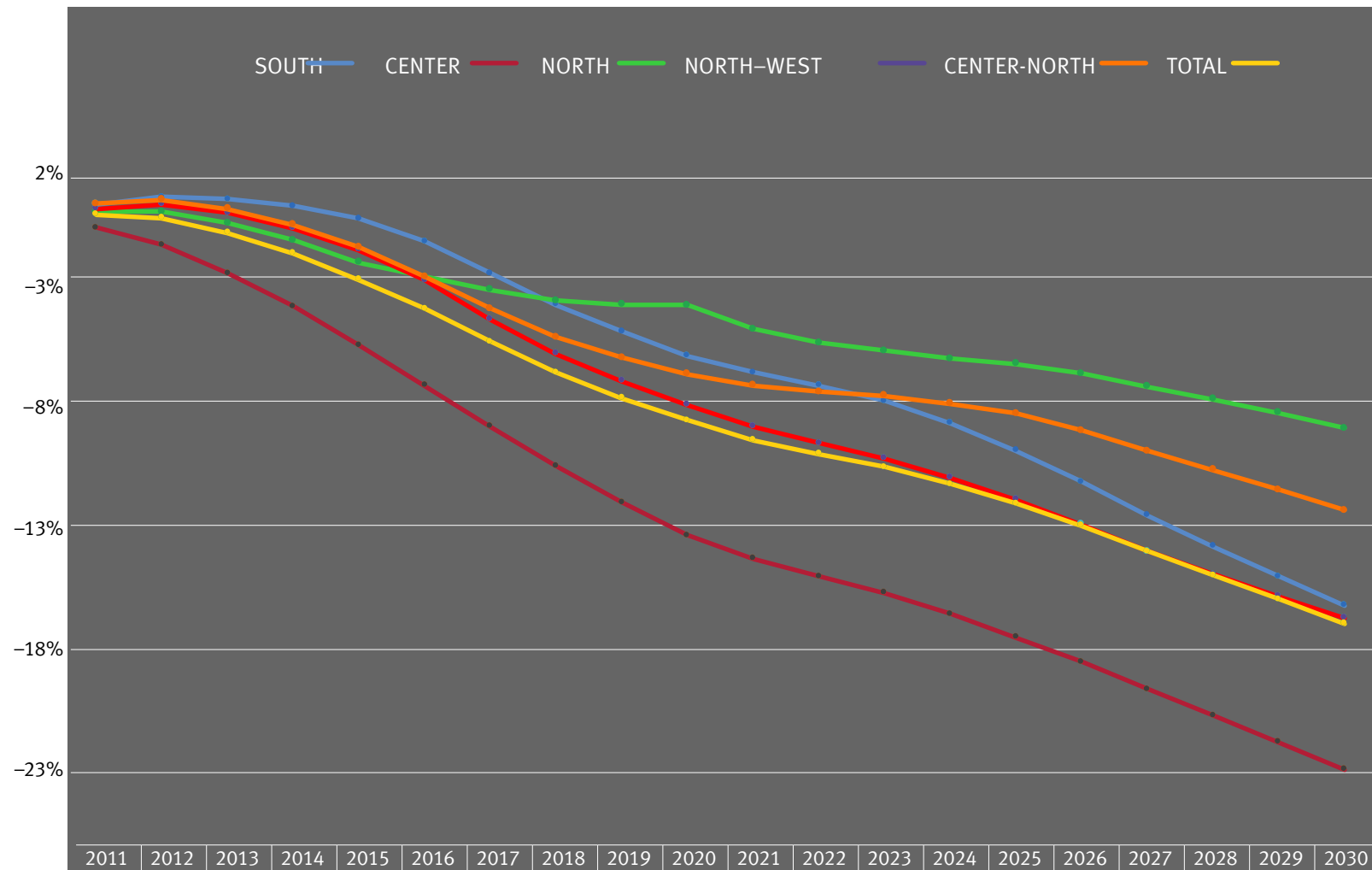
The slowdown in population growth directly affects the group aged 0 to 4 years. This reduction will become more evident over the next two decades. Between 2010 and 2025, this age group declined from $11,579,400$ to $10,244,800$ persons. The variation amounts to -11.5% or $-1,334,600$ children between 0 and 4 years of age (Conapo, n. d.). As with births, the impact is most severe in central Mexico, with a decline of -16.9% ($-729,700$), followed by the northwest and the south, with rates of -11.4% and -9.4% , respectively (Conapo, n. d.). This decline has led to the central region contributing a smaller share of the

Mexico City, State of Mexico and Veracruz show the most pronounced declines in population under a year old. Between 2010 and 2025, account for a loss of $-170,600$ children under one year of age, equivalent to 53% of the total national decline (Conapo, s.f.).



Image: Slowdown in population growth at <https://medicacampestre.com/cuneros/>

GRAPH 4. PROJECTED POPULATION OF CHILDREN AGED 0 TO 4 BY REGION OF THE COUNTRY
(2010 = 100) (%) (2011–2030)



Source: In-house elaboration with information from Conapo.
*The figures from 2024 onward correspond to Conapo forecasts.

young population in the country. Over the last three lustrums, the central region has gone from accounting for 37.2% to 34.9% of the population aged 0 to 4 years. In contrast, the northern region has increased its share, due to a combination of slow growth and a national slowdown, rising from 16.8% to 17.9% of this age group (Conapo, n. d.).

The northern region remains the one with the smallest decline (relative and absolute) in the 0 to 4-year-old population, with a variation of -5.9% (-114,600) (Conapo, n. d.). Much of the sustainability in the population growth of the north is due to the state of Nuevo Leon. The rise in birth rates in previous years will mean that this state will be the last to show a downward trend in the population under five years of age, a phenomenon that, according to Conapo projections, will likely occur from 2029 onward. For the period under analysis, four other states also showed positive growth; however, they have ceased to do so or will cease between this year and 2026: Baja California Sur, Chiapas, Queretaro and Quintana Roo.

2 HEALTH:

A LATE START THAT CANNOT BE ALTERED

Early childhood (0 to 5 years) is a life stage that determines our future potential and development. The first 1,000 days of life can shape a child's future and there is only one chance to get it right. The opportunities to which we can aspire largely depend on the conditions at the starting point (environment, family, region, household, income level, etc.), which can either constrain or expand future possibilities. Young children in developing countries are often exposed to multiple risks such as poverty, malnutrition, poor health and unstimulating family environments that negatively affect their cognitive, motor and socioemotional development, contributing to the current reality where more than 200 million children are not reaching their full developmental potential (Grantham *et al.* 2007).

We have identified adverse conditions faced during early childhood, from the gestational period to before the age of six. It is at this stage that the brain develops rapidly, so exposure to quality contexts and interactions is one of the main determinants of children's development. Although significant efforts exist to raise awareness about the needs of early childhood, these efforts are still insufficient.

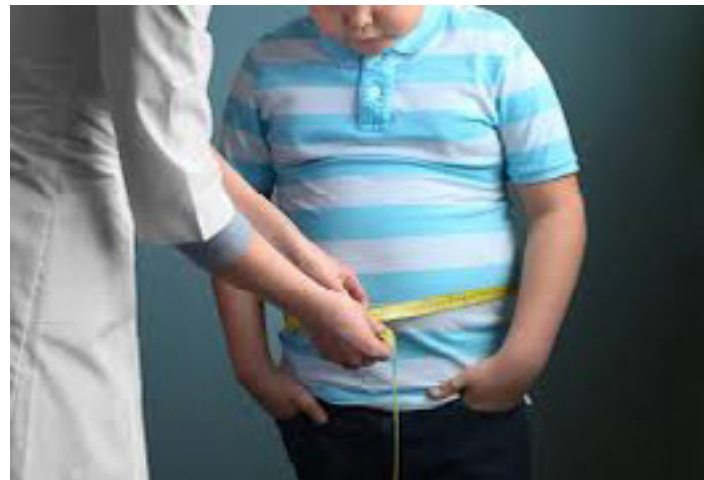
In Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 70 million children are unable to fully realize their developmental potential due to adversities in their environments, such as violence and lack of opportunities associated with poverty (ECLAC, 2014). This situation not only represents a loss of opportunities for each affected child, but also entails a significant cost for society as a whole (Irrazaval & Caqueo, 2022). For these reasons, the fight against poverty and inequality must begin at the earliest stages of life. The scale of the problem includes the 41.9% of children under the age of five in Mexico who live in poverty, of whom 8.8% are in extreme poverty (INEGI, 2025k). To make matters worse, at these stage children are even more exposed, since 1 in 3 (37.7%) lack access to health services (INEGI, 2025k). This leaves them unprotected and vulnerable during this first stage of life. Preventing and addressing these deprivations ensures that children are not trapped by obstacles that shape and determine their future opportunities.

Some of the most relevant factors that hinder future opportunities in health, education, poverty and violence. Risks to which young children are exposed: incomplete vaccination, unstimulating environments, poverty and inequality, barriers to accessing health and education and absence of proactive policies.

3 POVERTY AND EFFECTS DURING THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS OF LIFE

The general picture shows that there are more than 12.4 million children under the age of six, of whom 49.1% are girls and 50.9% are boys. In 2024, 3.9 million children were reported to be living in poverty, more than 813,000 of them in extreme poverty (INEGI, 2025k). Furthermore, the economic consequences of the pandemic increased global poverty levels and jeopardized decades of progress (Beltran & Sotomayor, 2024).

Increases in and/or persistence of poverty from childhood represent a risk, as it is more likely to become permanent, extending into later life stages and perpetuating the problem, thereby impeding full devel-



Risks to which young children are exposed: incomplete vaccination, unstimulating environments, poverty and inequality, barriers to accessing health and education and absence of proactive policies.

Image: "High level of children obesity" at <https://www.altonivel.com.mx/obesidad-infantil-aumenta-a-maximos-niveles-en-35-anos-segun-estudio/>

opment and well-being. Poverty is not the only problem children face. One in six children (16.1%) still lack access to nutritious and quality food (INEGI, 2025b). Additionally, one in eight children under five years of age suffers from chronic malnutrition (12.8%¹¹), while stunting remains at 16.2% (Shamah *et al.* 2024). Currently, the Pact for Early Childhood (Sotomayor, 2024a) sets critical goals for achieving a dignified childhood: among them, reducing poverty in early childhood to 40% and extreme poverty to 9%. The latest measurement shows that the population under five years of age experienced a poverty rate of 48.1% and extreme poverty of 11.6% (Coneval, 2023). This means we are 8.1 pp and 2.6 pp above the targets of 40% and 9%, respectively, for this age group (Pact for Early Childhood, 2024).

Another health-related consequence affecting children is the persistence of anemia. This condition often impacts cognitive development in early childhood, as it hinders the child's ability to process information due to inadequate neuronal connections resulting from iron deficiency in the blood (Merino, Toro, & Mendez, 2022). Data indicate that anemia affected 11.9% of children aged 1 to 4 nationwide; this percentage is twice as high for children in rural areas

¹¹ Shamah *et al.* 2022.

(23.4%), while urban areas reported a figure below the national average (8.4%) (Shamah *et al.* 2024).

Mexico ranks first worldwide in childhood overweight and obesity, and ninth in stunting among children in Latin America (FAO, 2023). In 2012, the percentage of children under five with overweight and obesity was 9.7%, a figure that declined to 6.8% in 2018, remained at 7.8% in 2021 and 2022 and marginally decreased in 2023 (6.7%) (Shamah *et al.* 2024). This is alarming, as the problem worsens as children grow older. Greater efforts are needed to improve children's health and nutrition in Mexico. This not only increases the need to guarantee children's rights but also raises the likelihood of building a healthier and more productive country.

4 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTIVE CAPACITIES

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is the orderly and predictable process through which a child learns to handle increasingly complex skills to move, think, speak, feel and interact with others (Shamah *et al.* 2024). According to Ensanut data, ECD results indicate that 4 out of 5 children¹² (79.5%) have adequate

¹² Children from 24 to 59 months

Mexico ranks first worldwide in childhood overweight and obesity, and ninth in stunting among children in Latin America (FAO, 2023).

development in health, learning and psychosocial well-being at the national level. This result is lower for boys than for girls (76.7% vs. 82.4%); higher for children whose mothers have completed upper secondary education (83%) compared to those whose mothers have only primary education or less (74.5%). Locally, ECD is lower for children living in rural areas (75.2%) than for those living in urban areas (81.1%) (Shamah *et al.* 2024).

These domains are essential for systematic and cumulative development reflected in physical growth, literacy and numeracy skills, socioemotional development and readiness to learn. For this reason, ECD is even included among the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, Mexico shows an 80% rate of adequate development in children under five, while 13% show growth delays (under five), and 71% live in stimulating home environments (UNESCO, 2024).

Although the data may not appear alarming, disparities mark differences from the earliest stages of life. All of this was exacerbated by the closure of preschools and childcare centers in 2020, during which more than 180 million children worldwide saw their preschool education interrupted. According to the lat-

est UNESCO report (2024), the new Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI2030) highlights inequalities among children of different backgrounds.

The probability of achieving developmental milestones (learning, health, or psychosocial) according to the ECDI2030 field test in Mexico shows significant disparities. The persistence of differences in children's responses reveals that in most tasks, children perform better on less difficult items (between 75% and 90%), while only 25% to 50% succeed in more complex tasks (UNICEF, 2023).

For example, between 75% and 90% of children can say 10 or more words (low difficulty) and consistently name objects; perform an activity without asking for help or giving up; use pronouns correctly (I, you, she, he); and/or get along with other children, among others. However, when analyzing more complex activities, a smaller percentage of children manage to perform them. Between 25% and 50% of children can say sentences of three or more words, count from 1 to 5, count up to 10, recognize at least 5 letters of the alphabet, and write their name, among other skills (UNICEF, 2023).

Results are influenced by certain characteristics and/or background of the child: it is expected that older

children will have more skills, but beyond age (42 to 59 months), other variables influence ECDI2030 outcomes. These include attendance at early childhood education (15.2%), having books at home (14.7%), belonging to the wealthiest households (13.9%), experiencing early stimulation (13.6%), gender (13.6%), mother's education (13.4% for mothers with upper secondary education) and absence of growth delay (13.3%), among others (UNICEF, 2023).

Given the accumulation of disadvantages from early childhood, it is necessary to rethink public actions, policies and programs that can help foster the skills needed in a constantly changing context. This requires reconsidering the conditions that shape children's environments in Mexico, how these conditions influence and determine their development, and their short, medium, and long-term potential. Ensuring equitable access to opportunities for quality early development and learning is crucial.

5 BASIC PRENATAL AND POSTPARTUM HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

Adequate coverage of health and nutrition services from pregnancy, particularly during the first 1,000 days of life, is essential to mitigate the potential negative effects of malnutrition, low weight, and stunting, as well as to reduce the risk of increased food insecurity among the most vulnerable populations left in the wake of the pandemic. Early action helps reduce infant and/or maternal mortality exacerbated by various crises (health, economic). Expanding an equal starting point requires addressing health circumstances that hinder full development.

Maternal and child health is an essential condition for family well-being and a key element in reducing inequality and poverty. The first 1,000 days of life, from pregnancy through two years of age, are a critical period for achieving optimal development for pregnant women and children under five. Access to healthcare services is one of the greatest challenges faced by the population in general and young children are no exception. Despite the urgent needs of this critical life stage, the lack of access to healthcare services has risen dramatically. In 2016, only 15.8% of children under five lacked access (1.9 million children), while in 2020 this figure rose to 31.1% (3.3 million).

By 2022, nearly half of all children in early childhood lacked access (45.9%), totaling 4.6 million Mexican children. In 2024, the figure stood at 37.7% (3.5 million) (Graph 5) (INEGI, 2025b).

To measure maternal and child health care, Ensanut (Shamah *et al.* 2024) analyzes the initiation of prenatal care. In this regard, compliance with at least five prenatal consultations during pregnancy and care provided by medical personnel during childbirth is of particular importance, along with the delivery of supplements during pregnancy or postpartum, as well as counseling during pregnancy. In addition, child wellness checkups and the services provided during them are considered, including the delivery of supplements as well as early childhood development assessments.

Under this framework, 66.2% of mothers of children under two years of age began prenatal care no later than the eighth week of gestation, while 89.2% of these women reported adequate prenatal care, defined as at least five prenatal consultations and care provided by medical personnel. Additionally, 99.9% of these women were attended to by health personnel during childbirth. Differences become evident when disaggregating by location: women living in urban ar-

reas have a higher prevalence of timely prenatal care than those residing in rural areas (71.1% vs. 50.5%) (Shamah *et al.* 2024).

The overview described thus far requires a more precise comparison. While the general outlook details the conditions faced by young children, it is necessary to measure how far we are from achieving better outcomes. One of the most important efforts has been to raise awareness of the needs of early childhood. The Early Childhood Pact has undertaken the task of investigating, analyzing and proposing the main key goals for the (comprehensive and full) development of early childhood in Mexico.



In 2016, only 15.8% of children under five lacked access to healthcare (1.9 million children).

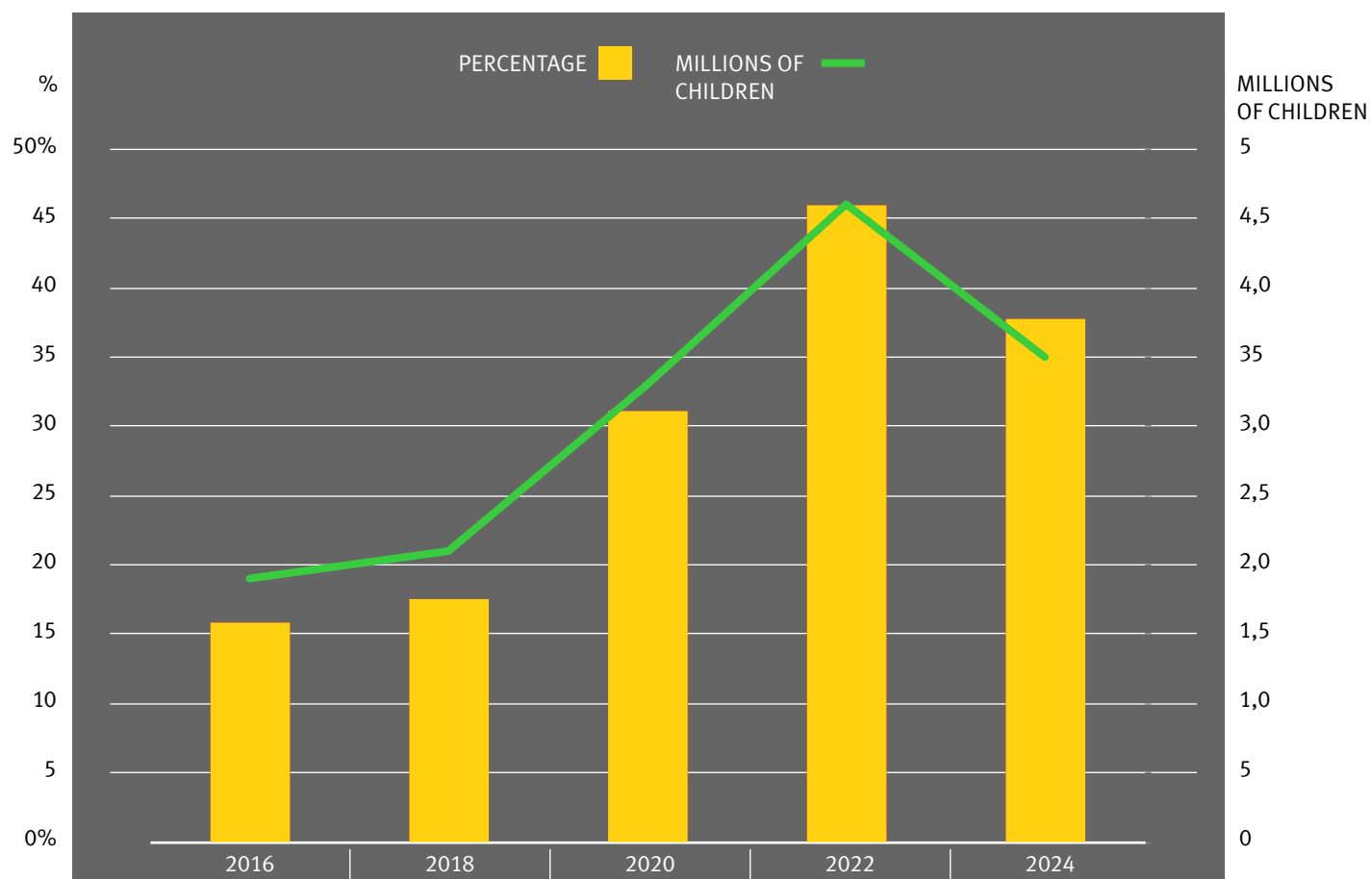
By 2022, 45.9% did not have access, equivalent to 4.6 million Mexican children.

In 2024, the figure stood at 37.7% (3.5 million) (INEGI, 2025b).

Image: Prenatal care at <https://reinamadre.mx/paquetes-de-maternidad-parto-cesarea/>

**GRAPH 5. CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OLD LACKING ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES
2016–2024**

PERCENTAGE & MILLIONS OF CHILDREN



Source: In-house elaboration with data from the Statistical Annex on Poverty in Mexico. Coneval (2023) and INEGI (2025b).

TABLE 1. CONTRAST BETWEEN PROGRESS ON PROPOSED EARLY CHILDHOOD GOALS AND CURRENT DATA

PROBLEM	GOAL	CURRENT DATA	DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTUAL POINTS (PP)
POVERTY	40%	41.9%	1.9
EXTREME POVERTY	9%	8.8%	−0.2
CHRONIC MALNUTRITION	8%	12.8%	4.8
PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY	5%	6.7%	1.7
ANEMIA	5%	11.9%	6.9
ADEQUATE ECD	90%	79.5%	−10.5
HEALTH SERVICE COVERAGE	80%	37.7%	−42.3

Source: In-house elaboration with data from the Pact for Early Childhood (2024), Shamah *et al.* (2024) and INEGI (2025b).

Under this standard, we can compare the proposed goals with the actual progress at the national level. The following table shows the target to be achieved, the actual figure attained and the difference between the two. In this regard, we find that early childhood poverty is 1.9 percentage points (pp) above the target; chronic malnutrition is 4.8 pp above the target; while the largest gaps are found in health service coverage and adequate Early Childhood Development (ECD) (34.1 and 10.5 pp below the target, respectively) (Table 1).

The full growth and development of childhood is crucial; therefore, the interventions and measures applied must be multisectoral, systematic, and cross-cutting. Given the needs of Mexican children outlined thus far, it is essential to rethink the actions aimed at achieving optimal health trajectories that prevent children from becoming trapped in conditions of poverty or exposed to health complications, particularly when it comes to preventable diseases. Boys and girls have the right to fully enjoy health, adequate nutrition, quality education, care and protection. The needs are multiple, and

so are the responsibilities; resources are necessary, and monitoring is crucial. This is especially true when disadvantages accumulate, since each step adds barriers that hinder the full exercise of their rights and future opportunities.

INFANT MORTALITY, MATERNAL MORTALITY

In recent years, some progress has been made in improving child health worldwide (UN, n. d.). At least 146 of the 200 countries considered have already reached or are on track to reach the SDG target on under-five mortality. According to United Nations data (UN, 2024), in the last two decades there has been a significant reduction in child mortality. Between 2015 and 2021, the global under-five mortality rate fell by 12%, from 43 deaths per 1,000 live births to 38. In addition, the global neonatal mortality rate fell by approximately 10%, from 20 deaths per 1,000 live births to 18. Despite these advances, 5 million children died before reaching their fifth birthday in 2021. Latin America and the Caribbean reported 16 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2021 (latest data) (UN, 2024).

National data allow for more detailed and updated monitoring. Despite the importance of the reduction in child mortality, the data reveal that in Mexico it has



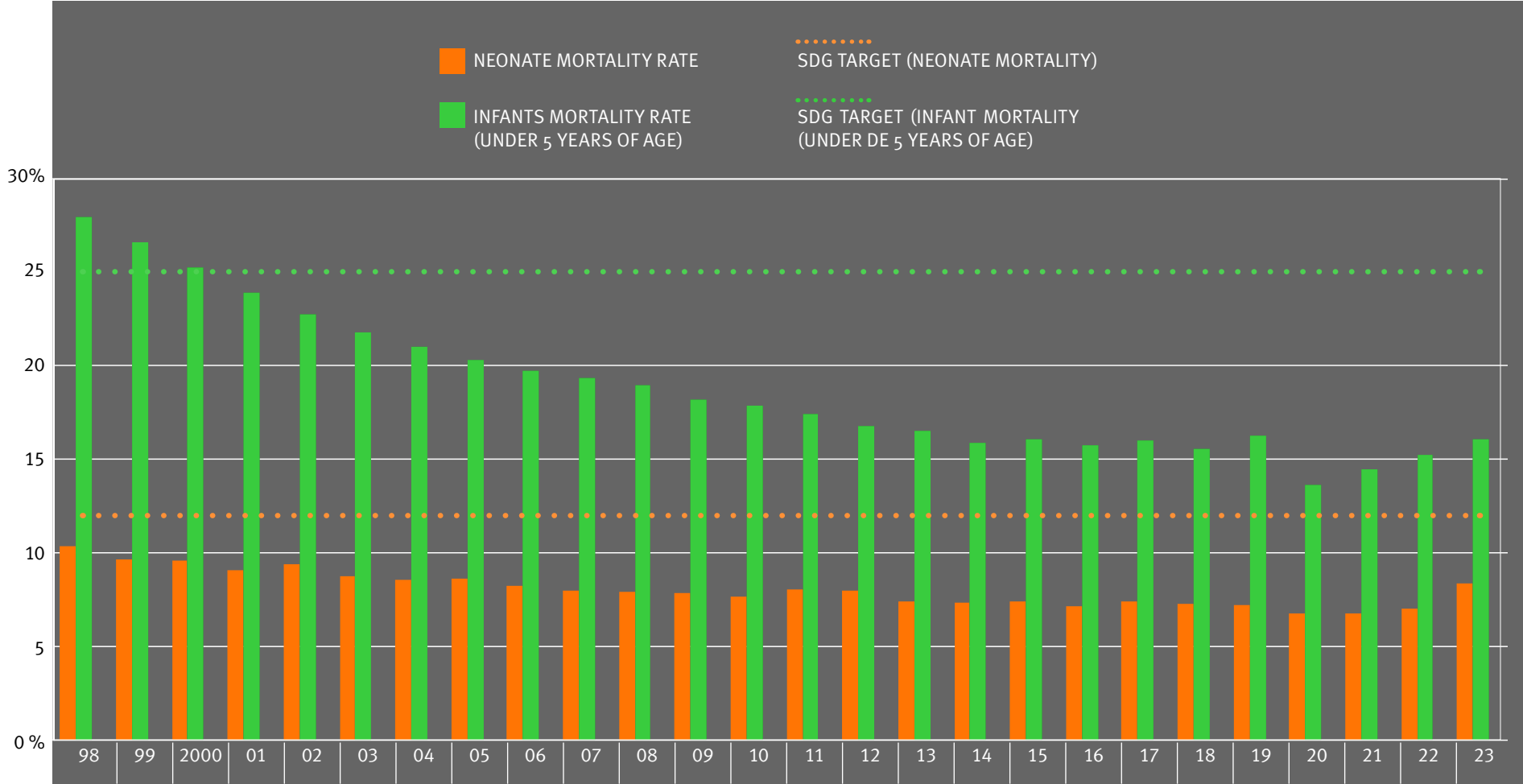
Image: "Mexico is the country in which every day 3 children are murdered and 7 disappear" at <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-51566105>

been increasing. At Signos Vitales (2024) we have documented the monitoring of this indicator, and unfortunately, it has been on the rise both for neonatal deaths (within the first 28 days of life), for children under one year of age, and for children under five years of age, with the latter stage being much more critical.

Graph 6 shows how in previous years the trend in child mortality was declining; however, starting in 2020, that trend was reversed. Unfortunately, the increase in child mortality has risen to 8.4 (per 1,000

GRAPH 6. INFANT MORTALITY RATE IN NEONATES AND CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS

1998–2023



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

live births) in the case of neonatal deaths, to 13.4 in the case of children under one year and to 16.1 in the case of children under five years (Government of Mexico, n. d.).

Although these data reflect compliance with the objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda (n. d.¹³), the reality is that more than 24,000 young children (ages 0 to 5) still died by the end of 2023. These are lives cut short before they could even aspire, imagine, or plan the course of their future. Most of these deaths were caused by conditions originating in the perinatal period (42.2%), congenital malformations (21.2%) and other respiratory diseases (9.1%).

In the case of maternal mortality, we have documented how at the beginning of the millennium maternal deaths decreased, only for these gains to later be lost (Signos Vitales, 2024). Maternal deaths dropped from 76.4 per 100,000 live births in 1998 to 71.3 in 2000, and to 42.1 in 2010; the lowest point was reached in 2015 with 35.2. Unfortunately, in 2020 and 2021, a drastic setback of more than a decade occurred, re-

¹³ Target 3.2.1 and 3.2.2: The objective is that by 2030, preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age will be eliminated. This effort entails reducing neonatal mortality to at least 12 per 1,000 live births and under-five mortality to at least 25 per 1,000 live births (UN, n. d.).

The trend in child mortality was declining; however, starting in 2020, that trend was reversed. More than 24,000 young children (ages 0 to 5) still died by the end of 2023. Most of these deaths were caused by conditions originating in the perinatal period (42.2%), congenital malformations (21.2%) and other respiratory diseases (9.1%).

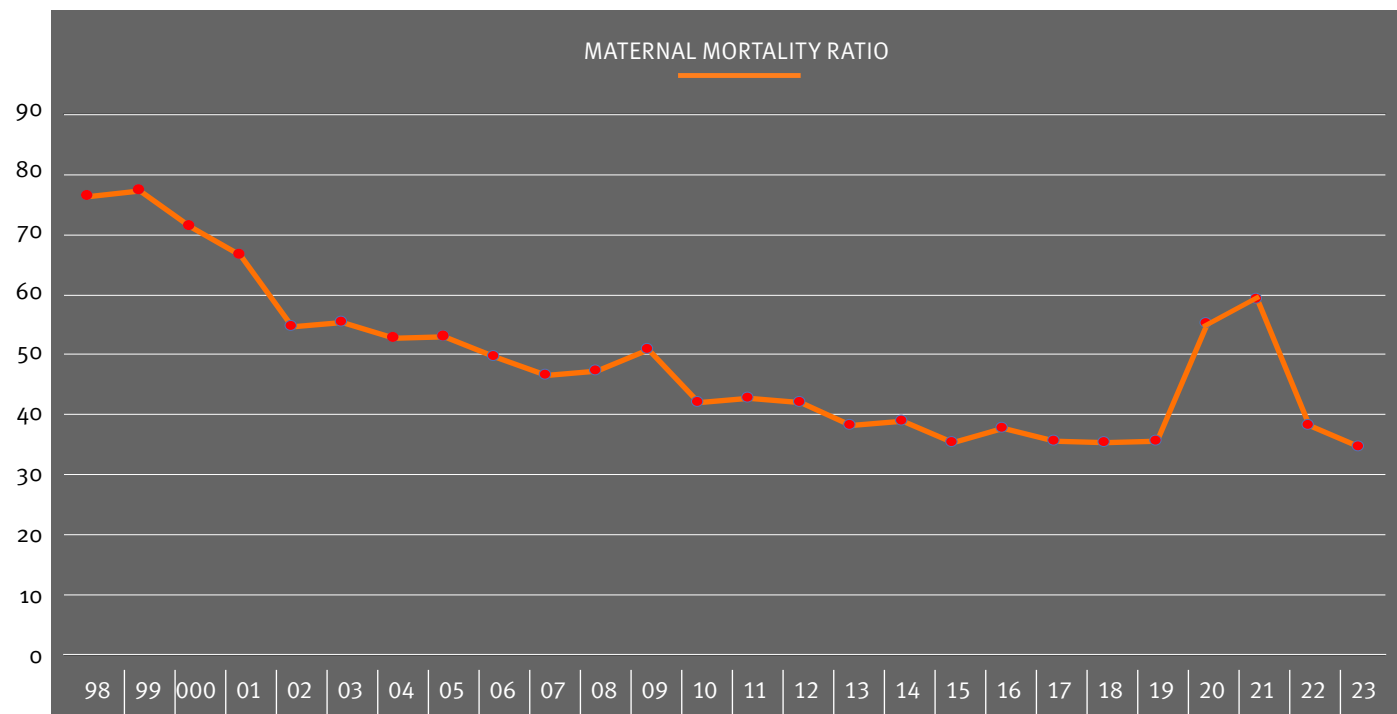
turning to 2010 levels with 55.2 and 59.2 deaths per 100,000 live births, figures likely associated with the health crisis during those years. In 2022 and 2023, levels returned to those observed before the pandemic (Graph 7).

It is possible that the pandemic contributed to the increase in maternal deaths in 2020 and 2021 primarily through two causes: indirect obstetric deaths (due to COVID-19 infection and fatalities resulting from the interaction between pregnancy and the virus) and direct obstetric deaths (interruptions in health services that hindered access to quality care and resulted in pregnancy complications¹⁴) (WHO, 2025).

¹⁴ The maternal mortality rate estimated by the WHO for Mexico in 2023 was 42, the risk of maternal deaths related to indirect causes such as HIV was 0.6%, and the percentage of deaths among women of reproductive age attributable to maternal causes was 1.5% (WHO, 2025).

GRAPH 7. MATERNAL MORTALITY DEATHS PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS

1998–2023



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

Challenges add up and accumulate and opportunities become even more limited when it comes to preserving life. In this particular case, health systems must be capable of responding to local needs and addressing emerging challenges. An action plan for maternal and child health is essential to ensure survival and life fulfillment. Far from considering the reduction of

maternal and child mortality as a mere goal tied to international agreements, the focus becomes deeper when we consider the lives without opportunities that preventable deaths failed to safeguard. Our children and those who become mothers have the right not only to survive but to enjoy good health for the rest of their lives.

6 VACCINATION

There are external factors beyond family environments that limit the conditions for full child development in the present and greater opportunities in the future. One of these factors is the limited availability of public health services focused on early childhood care, particularly the interruption in vaccination coverage that preserves life at this stage. Currently, immunization prevents between 3.5 and 5 million deaths each year from diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, influenza and measles. However, in 2023, 22 million children did not receive the first routine dose of the measles vaccine, a figure significantly higher than in 2019 (19.3 million) (WHO, n. d.). The WHO encourages countries to select vaccination schedules that are epidemiologically relevant, immunologically effective, operationally feasible and socially acceptable.

The benefits of immunization are unquestionable and the risks of failing to comply with basic vaccination schedules are irreversible: among its benefits is the prevention of infectious diseases, which has represented one of the most significant advances in public health. It is estimated that vaccines prevent 6 million deaths worldwide each year and contribute to more than 380 million years of life gained (Campins,



Image: "More than 340.000 children in Mexico did not receive any vaccine in 2024" at <https://elpais.com/mexico/2025-07-16/mas-de-340000-ninos-en-mexico-no-recibieron-ninguna-vacuna-en-2024.html>

2025). Regarding risks: in addition to the increase in the incidence of primarily infectious diseases¹⁵, there are added health complications and increases in child mortality, as well as the burden of future treatment costs. Thus, one of the factors that particularly affects children is the absence of vaccines and biologicals (Causey *et al.* 2021).

Despite the benefits of vaccination and the commitment to the health and lives of Mexican children, in Mexico vaccination schedules are not completed due to various factors, such as lack of coverage and the fragmentation of access to health services. Among the most affected are children from 0 to 12 years of age (childhood vaccination schedule), a very vulnerable sector with short and long-term implications. The childhood vaccination schedule is not adequately completed in Mexico. In 2022, only 1 in 4 children (26.6%) aged 2 years reported having a complete vaccination schedule, while among children under 1 year, this percentage was 42.6% (Mongua *et al.* 2023). The latest measurement from Ensanut (Shamah *et al.* 2024) indicates that these percentages have not improved significantly (Table 2).

¹⁵ Infectious diseases are disorders caused by organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites. These diseases can be transmitted from person to person or from animals and insects to humans (Mayo Clinic, n. d.).

TABLE 2. COVERAGE OF THE UNIVERSAL VACCINATION PROGRAM
IN INFANTS UNDER 2 YEARS OF AGE

YEARS	INFANTS UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE	INFANTS UNDER TWO YEARS OF AGE
2022	42.6%	26.6%
2023	49.4%	41.7%

Source: In-house elaboration with data from Ensanut (Shamah *et al.* 2024).

Regarding vaccination coverage by biological in boys and girls aged 1 and 2 years, for tuberculosis (BCG) at the national level, it indicates that the target for effective coverage was reached with a global average of 95.6% and a similar trend in both urban and rural areas (93.7% and 99.6%, respectively). The other vaccines that make up the Mexican vaccination schedule before the completion of the first year of life had estimated coverages of 66.9% for the third dose of hepatitis B, 67.6% for the third dose of the hexavalent vaccine, 84.8% for the second dose of rotavirus and 85.0% for the second dose of pneumococcus (Shamah *et al.* 2024).

In the case of the measles, rubella and mumps vaccine (MMR), the estimated vaccination coverage for the first dose scheduled upon reaching one year of

Anemia affected 11.9% of children aged 1 to 4 nationwide; this percentage is twice as high for children in rural (23.4%), Shamah et al. 2024.

age is 72.1%. This means that still 1 in 4 children has not received this vaccine. For the diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DPT) vaccine, coverage reached 79.6% in 2023 (Shamah *et al.* 2024). The World Health Organization (WHO) established the goal for its 194 member countries at a coverage of at least 90% of the population (WHO, 2014).

In Mexico, nearly 2,597 cases and at least 9 deaths associated with the measles virus have currently been confirmed (PAHO, 2025). The country was declared free of endemic measles in 2016; however, what we see today are the consequences of an accumulated lag in vaccination coverage that was already evident before the pandemic.

The clear consequences of failing to achieve vaccination coverage have been associated with outbreaks of invasive *Haemophilus influenzae* type b disease, chickenpox, pneumococcal disease, measles and pertussis (Salmon *et al.* 2015). These diseases, in a non-immunized person, can cause serious problems; for example, in the case of unvaccinated children against measles, it can trigger encephalitis in 1 out of every 1,000 measles cases; while in a pregnant woman, rubella infection can cause very severe congenital malformations in her child (Alvarez *et al.* 2024).

Another serious consequence is poliovirus infection, in which most people develop symptoms similar to the common cold, but in its most severe form, it can affect the spinal cord and cause paralysis or even death (UNICEF, 2020). In this way, contracting diseases such as those previously mentioned can cause unnecessary suffering in the affected population (mostly young children) and a waste of limited health care resources (Salmon *et al.* 2015). Therefore, it can be emphasized that the role of vaccines is crucial in preventing infectious diseases, avoiding morbidity and mortality, reducing suffering, saving lives and curbing the high costs of health care (Galindo *et al.* 2011).

In 2023, 22 million children did not receive the first routine dose of the measles vaccine, a figure significantly higher than in 2019 (19.3 million) (WHO. s.f).



Image: 26 May 2025: Measles cases rise to 1,500 in Mexico at <https://www.unotv.com/salud/mil-530-casos-de-sarampion-en-mexico-donde-estados-mas-afectados/>

There is no more effective preventive health intervention than vaccination. Although universal vaccination is a right, since it provides protection against illnesses, disabilities and deaths from preventable diseases, the allocated budget seems inconsistent with this principle. According to the budget allocation, the amount assigned to the budgetary program “Reduction of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases” (E036) was 14,031,538,176 pesos in 2024. In contrast, the corresponding amount in 2023 was 14,021,841,653 pesos, representing an increase of only 0.01% or 9,696,523 pesos more. However, the amount allocated for 2025 was only 4,571,752,397 pesos, representing a reduction of 67.4% compared to the allocation in 2024 (SHCP, 2025). This, despite the fact that the purpose of said program is to reduce the infant mortality rate and to fulfill the doses administered during the National Vaccination Week.

In fact, when analyzing the budget for early childhood from 2018 to 2024, it was found that it represented 0.6% of GDP. Although there was an increase in the per capita average expenditure per child (from 4,584 pesos in 2018 to 11,235 pesos in 2024), the budget was distributed unevenly. Sixty-one percent of the budget allocated to early childhood was directed to education (+1,070%), while sectors such as health

and protection fell by -43% and -52%, respectively. Furthermore, in 2024, three times more was spent on older adults and eight times more on unemployed youth than on early childhood (Sotomayor, 2024b).

Given that the decline in the early childhood health budget between 2018 and 2024 was 24%, with more than 16 billion pesos less (Sotomayor, 2024b), the drops in vaccination coverage were inevitable and the consequences severe. It is also necessary to consider the implications of the interruption of vaccination due to the pandemic. In fact, there is evidence indicating that the pandemic had a significant impact on the systematic interruption of vaccination in 2020, due to health systems focusing their efforts on reducing the transmission of the virus (Causey *et al.* 2021).

In this regard, the data found reveal that globally, coverage for diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTP3¹⁶) vaccination was 76.7% in 2020, while 78.9% received the measles vaccine (MCV1¹⁷) worldwide. This percentage represents relative reductions of 7.7% and 7.9% compared to expected doses administered in the absence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This means

At least 30 million children did not receive the third dose against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis and 27.2 million did not receive the measles vaccine (from January to December 2020).

16 Percentage of children who routinely received the third dose of the diphtheria vaccine.

17 Percentage of children who received the first dose of measles vaccine.

that at least 30.0 million children did not receive the third dose against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis and 27.2 million did not receive the measles vaccine (from January to December 2020). This implies an increase of 8.5 and 8.9 million more children not routinely vaccinated against DTP3 and MCV1 than there would have been in the absence of COVID-19 (Causey *et al.* 2021).

This situation affected the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region to a greater extent, since coverage for the DTP3 vaccine was only 75% (1.7 pp lower than the global level), and 6.6% of the coverage loss was attributed to COVID-19. In the case of the measles vaccine, coverage was 81.3% in LAC in 2020, and 9.2% of the coverage loss was attributed to COVID-19 (Causey *et al.* 2021). Systematic immunization services in Mexico have faced serious challenges such as budget, low health coverage, access to services and/or the 2020 health pandemic. This caused the most widespread and severe disruption in recent history not only in the country but also worldwide.

The combination of delays in catch-up vaccination services, the ongoing transmission of COVID-19, and the persistent gaps in vaccination coverage prior to the pandemic left millions of children with insufficient

or no vaccines against preventable diseases by the end of 2020 and it is likely that these gaps will extend into subsequent years. Strengthening systematic immunization data systems and initiatives to allocate resources and outreach will be essential to minimize the risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, reach children who did not receive routine vaccination doses during the pandemic and accelerate progress toward broader and more equitable vaccination coverage over the next decade.

7 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: INEQUALITY AND DISADVANTAGE (LAG)

In Mexico, transforming education requires a comprehensive approach to every stage of the life cycle. We know that in our country the Constitution establishes the obligation, gratuity, and guarantee of early childhood, primary, secondary, upper secondary and higher education; however, analyzing the outcomes of each educational level is imperative.

Through education, individuals can develop their potential and fully realize themselves in order to achieve a prosperous future. Yet it is not enough for the State to provide educational services to children and youth, since many of them do not manage to complete compulsory education nor acquire fundamental learning.

Analyzing educational trajectories is essential, and based on the available information, we know that education in Mexico starts late and ends early. Only 10% of infants (under 3 years old) receive educational attention, and 59.1% do so during preschool age. Reaching high school is more complex: out of every 100 children who begin primary school, only 84 manage to enroll in high school and just 54 complete it. Moreover, only 28 out of every 100 individuals who start their studies in primary school complete higher education (IEEC-Mexico Evalua, 2024).

With regard to early childhood education (0 to 6 years old), in 2020 the National Early Childhood Care Strategy (ENAPI) was published, through which early childhood education was incorporated as part of basic education, thereby recognizing it as a right of children (Presidencia de la Republica, 2019).

In 2022, the National Policy on Early Childhood Education (PNEI) was issued, encompassing all programs for boys and girls from 0 to 3 years old. The PNEI acknowledges the need to improve the quality of both school-based and non-school-based early childhood education services. Within this policy, a commitment was established to promote the development and adoption of minimum quality standards in early child-

hood education centers and, with its entry into force, the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) was mandated to establish concrete actions for the implementation of strategies to achieve its objectives (SEP, 2022).

However, one challenge the State faces in intervening in the developmental levels of children is the low use of early childhood care and education services. In Mexico, there are two educational levels aimed at early childhood: early education, which serves children from 43 or 45 days to 35 months and preschool education, which serves children from 36 to 59 months. Under this scheme, at the national level, 10.2% of children aged 0 to 35 months attend a care or early education program, while 59.1% of children aged 36 to 59 months attend preschool. These percentages are lower in the case of girls and in rural localities (Table 3).

These figures are far from the 100% required by compulsory education¹⁸ and also reflect that, from a very early age, inequalities begin to emerge both by geographic area (differences between rural and urban) and by gender (girls and boys). Despite significant legislative efforts addressing early childhood, there

¹⁸ The obligation to provide the service and to attend school applies to preschool. In the case of the 0–3 age group, there are training and support programs for mothers and fathers.

TABLE 3. ATTENDANCE OF GIRLS AND BOYS UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND PRESCHOOL SERVICES
2023

BREAKKDOWN	ATTENDANCE IN CARE OR EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS (0 TO 3 YEARS)	ATTENDANCE IN PRESCHOOL (3 TO 5 YEARS)
NATIONAL	10.2%	59.1%
RURAL	10.9%	55.3%
URBAN	10.0%	60.3%
BOY	11.3%	61.2%
GIRL	9.2%	56.9%

Source: In-house elaboration with data from Shamah *et al.* (2024).

Access to education in Mexico starts late and ends early. Only 10% of infants (under 3 years old) receive educational attention, and 59.1% do so during preschool age.

are still elements to be considered, such as the absence of institutions or programs that guarantee children's attendance at these stages of life¹⁹. This reduces the possibilities for adequate child development, which has repercussions on health, learning and psychosocial well-being. At the national level, one fifth of five-year-old children do not have adequate development (Shamah *et al.* 2024).

¹⁹ 67.9% of infants do not attend preschool because they are very young and 13.2% because there is no institution or program at that level (Shamah, *et al.* 2024).

Finally, we cannot overlook the imminent loss of learning from early ages as an effect of the pandemic. Part of the implications of the COVID generation is reflected in learning losses, including among the youngest. For example, the percentage of preschool-age girls and boys lost more than 34% of learning in language and early literacy and more than 29% of learning in mathematics (Hevia, Vergara-Lope, & Velasquez, 2024). The goals are still far from being achieved and obstacles emerge from very early stages of life. Unfortunately, in all the indicators analyzed, the data reveal that we are well below the objectives set (Table 4).

TABLE 4. CONTRAST BETWEEN THE PROPOSED GOAL FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD AND THE CURRENT DATA

PROBLEM	GOAL	CURRENT DATA	DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS (PP)
VACCINATION OF CHILDREN UNDER 1 YEAR	90%	49.4%	−40.6
VACCINATION OF CHILDREN UNDER 2 YEARS	90%	41.7%	−48.3
CHILDREN UNDER 3 YEARS WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	20%	10.2%	−9.8
QUALITY PRESCHOOL EDUCATION	85%	59.1%	−25.9

Source: In-house elaboration with data from Pacto por la Primera Infancia (2024), Shamah *et al.* (2024) y Coneval (2023).

The data suggest key interventions are needed to achieve full present and future development without compromising quality and even less so the lives of our children in Mexico. These interventions involve health and education, two key factors in fostering greater social mobility. This is the case even when there is evidence that investment in early childhood development reduces deficits and strengthens the economy (Heckman, n. d.). It has been demonstrated that investments in skill development during early childhood generate the highest economic and social returns compared to investments made in later stages of life (Heckman, 2016).

8 OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION

According to data from the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), between the 2018–2019 and 2023–2024 school years, the number of students enrolled in formal early childhood education (ages 0 to 3) decreased from 267,038 to 225,404, representing a reduction of −15.6% (−41,634 students) (SEP, n. d.). For the same period, the attendance rate dropped from 4.1 to 3.6%. Historically, early childhood education has been sustained primarily by the private sector. For the 2023–2024 school year, there were 225,404 students enrolled in formal schooling, of which 99,500 attended public services and 125,904 attended pri-

Between the 2018–2019 and 2023–2024 school years, the number of students enrolled in formal early childhood education decreased from 267,038 to 225,404, representing a reduction of −15.6% (−41,634 students) (SEP, n. d.).

Only 28 out of 100 children who start their studies in Primary, finish higher studies.

The educational trajectories are broken in highschool and young people leave their studies.

vate services (SEP, n. d.). In this way, 55.9% of total enrollment was in private early childhood education.

The most severe contraction has occurred in private services. In the 2018–2019 school year, enrollment distribution by type of institution was 162,159 (60.7%) in private schools and 104,879 (39.3%) in public schools (SEP, n. d.). For the same period, attendance in private schools decreased by –22.4% (–36,255 students), while public schools registered a –5.1% variation (–5,379 students) (SEP, n. d.). Private schools account for 87.1% of the loss. Demand for early childhood educational services has declined considerably, followed by a reduction in installed capacity. The number of private schools, which had the largest share, fell from 3,042 to 1,831, a –39.8% variation. In contrast, the number of public schools remained practically unchanged, going from 3,200 to 3,202 (SEP, n. d.).

Likewise, the number of teaching staff is also lower in private schools: 4,570 teachers in private schools compared to 5,757 in public schools (SEP, n. d.). This means that the student–teacher ratio is 27.6 in private schools versus 17.3 in public schools. In private schools, there are 59.4% more students per teacher than in public schools. Despite the reduction in in-

stalled capacity, private schools maintain a growing trend in teaching staff, though at a lower rate than the public service. For the same years, teaching staff in private and public schools grew by 6.7% and 11.9% (SEP, n. d.), respectively.

Between 2018 and 2024, based on financial transaction data from bank cards, aggregate household expenditure on daycare services increased by approximately 13.7%. The number of transactions grew by a smaller margin (12.1%). However, the average transaction amount rose from 2,382.3 to 2,415.7 pesos (a nominal variation of 1.4%) (Banxico, n. d. c). This indicates a real-term reduction in the cost of care. Given the type of payment, it is reasonable to infer that these are private services. Between 2018 and 2024, household consumption on education decreased by an average of 21.8%. The average monetary expenditure fell from 1,238.6 to 968.1 pesos per household per month. The number of households reporting educational expenditures decreased by 3.8%. Households reporting education spending declined from 15,329,160 to 14,750,476. Consequently, the proportion of total households reporting education expenditures dropped from 44.6% to 38%. The contraction in spending is greater among households reporting education expenditures. In this case, average spend-

The most severe contraction has occurred in private education. In the 2018–2019 school year was 162,159 (60.7%) in private schools and 104,879 (39.3%) in public schools (SEP, n. d.).

ing declined from 2,777.7 to 2,547.5 pesos per month (−8.3%) (INEGI, 2025).

It must be noted that a decline in average expenditure should not necessarily be interpreted as a decrease in demand, particularly in a specific educational level, especially when INEGI statistics on daycare center revenues are taken into account. Between 2018 and 2024, revenues of these establishments increased by 3.9% in real terms (INEGI, 2025f). In the accumulated period from January to April 2025, this trend persisted, with annual revenue growth of 2.9% (INEGI, 2025f). The resurgence of this activity is recent and dates back to 2023, as it was one of the hardest hit sectors after the major lockdown. The data suggest that private services are increasing their revenues due to higher demand (growth in transactions or payments) since 2022, while average prices have decreased.

9 FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF CHILDHOOD: CHALLENGES OF ANONYMITY AND THE NORMALIZATION OF VIOLENCE

A solid rule of law ensures that childhood rights laws are effectively implemented. The Mexican Constitution, together with the General Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (LGDNNA), establishes several fundamental rights for children aged 0 to 5. These rights include the right to life, health and adequate nutrition, all essential for cognitive and physical development. It also establishes the right to early childhood education, to live within a family and a safe environment, the right to equality, protection from child abuse and neglect, as well as from child labor. Finally, a fundamental right during early childhood is the right to identity, in other words, the right to be registered at birth, which in turn allows children to access—in theory—education, health, social protection and eventually employment.

Throughout this chapter, we have seen how health, poverty and early childhood education constitute important engines of social mobility in Mexico. Therefore, this section focuses on how fundamental rights such as protection from child abuse, neglect and the right to identity are linked to greater or lesser social mobility for children in Mexico.

RIGHT TO IDENTITY

According to the latest INEGI Census in 2020, at the national level, 10.1 million (26.3%) children were between 0 and 4 years of age²⁰. Regarding birth registration, 97% of them had a birth certificate, representing an increase of 3.6% compared to the 2015 Census. However, despite good coverage, differences between states could still be observed: in states such as Chiapas and Oaxaca, registration was 89.1% and 93.1%, respectively, while in states such as Coahuila and Nuevo Leon, registration was reported at 98.8% and 98.2% of births (Redim, 2025). In 2023, 1,829,888 births were registered, of which 81.6% had an official record before their first birthday (INEGI, 2024l). Although concrete data for 2024 and 2025 are not yet available at the close of this report, several sources suggest that the annual early registration pattern of around 82% continues.

These statistics may suggest compliance by the Mexican state regarding the right to identity. However, several sources indicate that there are still between 400,000 and 800,000 children in Mexico without a birth certificate, many of them migrants or Indigenous. Although the LGDNNA stipulates the obligation

²⁰ 10.8 million (28.1%) were between 5 and 9 years old.

of registration and states that “federal, state and municipal authorities, as well as those of the territorial divisions of Mexico City, within the scope of their respective competencies, must collaborate in the search, location and collection of necessary information to establish or restore the identity of children and adolescents” (Government of Mexico, 2019), the underreporting of registrations demonstrates shortcomings in the law’s implementation. Moreover, without legal registration, these children risk being deprived of basic rights and therefore face difficulties in accessing essential services such as health, education and social protection, in addition to being exposed to risks such as labor exploitation or child marriage later in life. This provides evidence that the right to identity has significant implications for social mobility from the moment of birth.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

According to Redim data, in 2023 there were a total of 1,675 cases of family and non-family violence against children aged 1–5 in Mexico. In 2022, there were 1,577 cases, in 2021 there were 1,298 and in 2020 there were 1,131 (Redim, 2023), indicating a continuous rise between 2020 and 2023. Within this, sexual violence is the most common form in this age

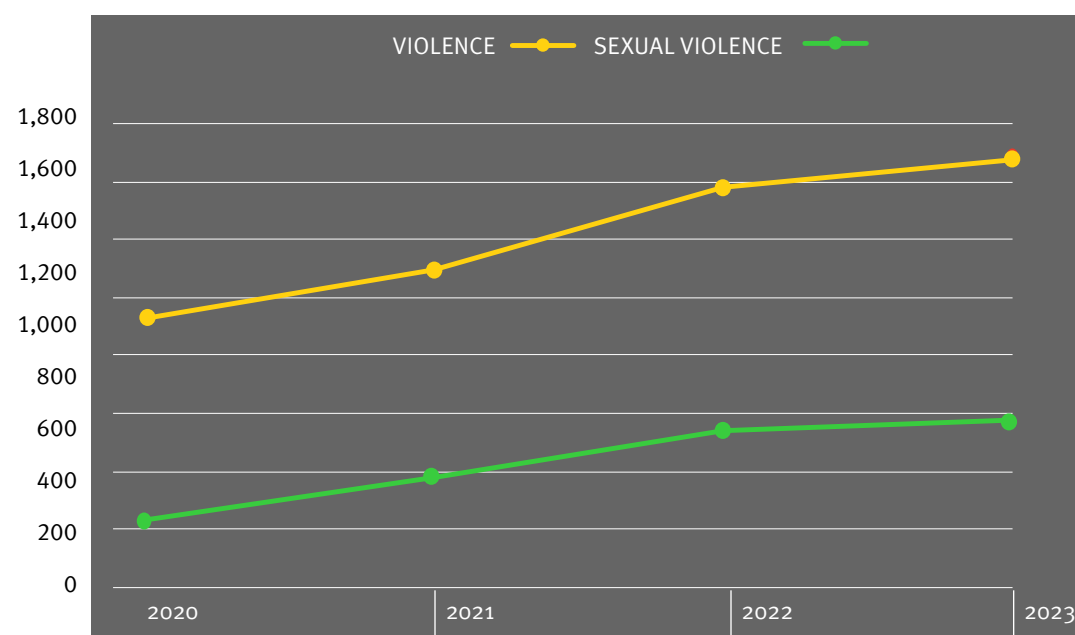
Several sources indicate that there are still between 400,000 and 800,000 children in Mexico without a birth certificate, many of them migrants or Indigenous. The most affected states are Chiapas and Oaxaca.

group: in 2023 there were 776 cases, in 2022 there were 742, in 2021 there were 580 and in 2020 there were 433, representing 46%, 47%, 44% and 38% of sexual violence victims, respectively. Due to underreporting, the actual number is estimated to be higher than recorded cases. Even without considering underreporting, sexual violence has become one of the most serious public health problems in Mexico. It is important to highlight that family-based violence is the most common in this age group. According to Redim, 13.4% of sexual violence victims identified their father or stepfather as the aggressor, which means that other factors, such as organized crime, are not considered in the analysis of ages 0–5, unlike in older age groups.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health reported in the Injury Registry that between 2019 and 2021, there were 1,201 children and adolescents aged 1–17 who were treated in hospitals for abandonment or neglect. This represented an increase of 51.8% compared to the number of people treated the previous year (Ministry of Health, n. d.). By 2023, the figure rose slightly to 1,239 (Redim, 2024), but when compared with 2010 (the first year of record), there was an increase of more than 590%, indicating that the last decade has meant significant setbacks in terms of children's

rights. For the 1–5 age group, the figure for 2023 was 144, the second-highest number on record (only in 2022 were there more cases, with 146). While this figure represents a relatively small proportion of the total, what stands out is the upward trend in the abandonment of children in this age group, similar to that observed in cases of violence (Graph 8).

**GRAPH 8. CASES OF VIOLENCE
AGAINST BOYS AND GIRLS AGED 1–5 YEARS OLD
2020–2023**



Source: In-house elaboration with information from Redim (2023 and 2024).

In this regard, another relevant figure to consider is the number of children living in social welfare housing. Data from the 2020 INEGI Census indicate that approximately 54,000 individuals aged 0 to 17 were living in social welfare accommodations. Of these, 17,343 children aged 0–9 lived in children’s homes, shelters for Indigenous peoples or migrant shelters, representing 32% of the total (Redim, 2023b). In addition, one in every 91 children did not have a birth certificate (1.1%), but among those aged 0–9, this figure rose to one in every 30 (3.3%). On the other hand, data presented by the Senate in 2022 indicate that the number of orphans skyrocketed to approximately 131,000 as a result of the COVID–19 pandemic, placing Mexico among the five countries with the highest number of orphans worldwide (Senado de la Republica, 2022). Estimates from Imperial College London and the Independent Commission of Investigation on the COVID–19 Pandemic in Mexico calculate that approximately 215,300 children lost one or both parents. Undoubtedly, the absence of one or both parents in the early years of life often translates into emotional, economic and social deprivation. As an example, it is estimated that the school dropout rate among children who lost both parents reaches 35%, while the percentage among children with one

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Approximately 215,300 children lost one or both parents (Imperial College London y de la Comision Independiente de Investigacion sobre la Pandemia de COVID–19 en Mexico), 2024).



Image: "Orphans of the pandemic in Mexico face a challenge when returning to school" at <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/hu%C3%A9rfanos-de-la-pandemia-en-m%C3%A9xico-enfrentan-el-desaf%C3%ADo-de-volver-a-clases/46899798>

surviving parent who drop out of school is 17.4% (INEGI, 2021). These deprivations directly affect individual development as well as future opportunities for integration and mobility within the country's socioeconomic structure. In a national context where upward social mobility is already extremely limited, the absence of family care in early childhood constitutes an additional barrier to achieving real and sustainable social mobility.

Given this panorama, it is evident that the reality of childhood does not necessarily correspond to the rights guaranteed in Mexico's legal frameworks. To make matters worse, various international and civil society organizations in Mexico, have raised alarms about underreporting and the invisibility of the problem of child abandonment and violence, making it one of the main obstacles to addressing it.

Consequently, abandonment and violence experienced by children, especially those aged 0–5, have increasingly significant implications for their opportunities for comprehensive development later in life. The Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development clearly states that “maltreatment occurring in the first five years of life can be especially harmful, given children's vulnerability and the fact that these early years are characterized by faster neurobiological and psychological growth than in subsequent years” (Toth *et al.* 2004). Some studies conclude that children who have experienced violence or abandonment are 1.8 times more likely to be arrested or to develop substance abuse problems. Furthermore, more than 50% of victim's experience difficulties in school. Therefore, the traumas caused by violence or abandonment exert not only a prolonged impact on children but also become factors affecting society as a whole, representing decisive engines of social mobility.

Given this panorama, it is evident that the reality of childhood does not necessarily correspond to the rights guaranteed in Mexico's legal frameworks.





4 CHILDHOOD and ADOLESCENCE

<https://www.unfpa.org/es/stories/haciendo-la-diferencia-en-m%C3%A9xico>

4 CHILDHOOD and ADOLESCENCE

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The circumstances experienced during early childhood have consequences for development throughout the rest of life. These range from affecting opportunities to continue studying, obtaining and keeping a job, to generating uncertainties and vulnerabilities in old age. Timely intervention is crucial and has the advantage of preventing the intergenerational transmission of vulnerabilities. This section analyzes the opportunities available to children and adolescents aged 6 to 15. We consider a context in which poverty, inequality, schooling, conditions of public services and the prevailing insecurity, among other factors, are present.

Poverty is a component that persists throughout all stages of life and childhood and adolescence are no exception. In this regard, in Mexico 39.3% of the population between 6 and 11 years old lives in poverty and 4.4% in extreme poverty (INEGI, 2025b). Similarly, among those aged 12 to 17, 36% live in poverty and 6.6% in extreme poverty (INEGI, 2025b). On the other hand, it is precisely at this stage that the disruption of educational trajectories is most significant. The average schooling at the national level reaches 9.7 years, equivalent to completing lower secondary education and entering upper secondary education (EMS). However, the data reflect a decline in enrollment upon entry into EMS.

This stage of transition from childhood to adolescence involves important configurations in which learning is indispensable. It is essential both for greater opportunities in school and in the labor market, as well as for strengthening the skills and human capital that the country needs. Unfortunately, significant shortcomings are also evident in this area, as children are not achieving the basic learning levels required in basic education. This is without yet considering the setbacks implied by the absence of systematic knowledge in the basic education textbooks. Gaps have been identified in areas such as mathematics, history and reading and writing, among others, raising questions about the quality of educational materials. This, combined with the lack of adequate conditions in schools, represents only some of the adversities faced during this stage of life, which will undoubtedly shape subsequent opportunities.

1 POVERTY IN ADOLESCENCE: FUTURE LIMITATIONS

Mexico is a poor country and children and adolescents face the harsh conditions this entails. Childhood and youth face a scenario of poverty and extreme poverty (Table 5) and also experience deprivations that, if not addressed, will represent difficult barriers to overcome in the next stage of life. The following table describes the proportion of children and adolescents aged 6 to 11 and 12 to 17 who experience poverty, extreme poverty and different forms of deprivation. After the deprivation of access to social security (53.2% and 56.9%), the deprivation of access to health services is the second most prevalent (36.5% and 33.5%, respectively) (INEGI, 2025b) (Table 5).

It is worth noting that for children between the ages of 6 and 11, between 2022 and 2024 the largest reduction was in poverty (–7.7 pp) compared to the reduction in extreme poverty (–2.7 pp). However, on average, children face two deprivations that allow for their classification as poor (food, health, social security, education, quality and living space in housing and basic housing services) (INEGI, 2025k). In the case of adolescents aged 12 to 17, the reductions were also greater for those who were in poverty (–6.9 pp) than for those who exited extreme poverty (–1.8 pp) in

Gaps have been identified in areas such as mathematics, history and reading and writing, among others, raising questions about the quality of educational materials..

2024 compared to 2022. In this case, on average, children and adolescents are also vulnerable in at least 2.1 of the aforementioned deprivations (INEGI, 2025b).

The equitable expansion of freedoms for children and youth is not only a matter of more money but the realization of rights. Sustained economic growth and the effective enjoyment of social rights are key elements for people to progress equally in basic aspects of life and experience social mobility that equalizes opportunities. The challenge persists, as the persistence of poverty remains a difficult reality to address and resolve. One of the State’s greatest challenges is achieving genuine social transformation that triggers equal opportunities for individuals, starting by eliminating the inequalities that create barriers throughout life.

2 BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTH CARE

Access to health services at every stage of life is crucial given the risks to which we are exposed at every step. Studies have analyzed the basic dimensions of human development and in particular, the health dimension has shown interesting results. Health governance (expansion of clinics and hospitals, vaccines, preventive measures) plays an important role in granting people access to health care. The idea is to analyze whether the health services people access

TABLE 5. CONDITIONS OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL DEPRIVATION
IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

POPULATION BY AGE	POPULATION 6 TO 11 YEARS OLD	POPULATION 12 TO 17 YEARS OLD
PEOPLE UNDER CONDITIONS OF POVERTY	39.3%	36.0%
PEOPLE UNDER CONDITIONS OF EXTREME POVERTY	7.4%	6.6%
EDUCATIONAL LAG	1.4%	15.4%
LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES	36.5%	33.5%
LACK OF ACCESS TO SOCIAL SECURITY	53.2%	56.9%
LACK OF QUALITY AND SPACES AT HOME	11.7%	10.2%
LACK OF ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES IN HOUSING	17.2%	16.9%
LACK OF ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS AND QUALITY FOOD	16.8%	17.9%

Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2025b).

today are better than those available years ago. Evidence shows that health governance has improved the quality of and the number of years of life people are expected to live. For the age group between 6 and 11 years, life expectancy in Mexico increased from 77.1 years in 2000 to 78.1 years in 2012 (UNDP, 2016).

The total number of years a person is expected to live increases through a combination of individual decisions, opportunities and the influence of public policy on them. The results in life expectancy can be understood as slow and modest progress compared to other countries for the same ages and years analyzed²¹. Currently, the Independent Commission of Investigation on the COVID–19 Pandemic in Mexico estimated a reduction in life expectancy between 2019 and 2021 of up to 4.6 years. This setback means returning to life expectancy levels from 30 years ago. Of this decrease, 76% has been directly attributed to COVID–19 (Sanchez & Sepulveda, 2024).

In fact, given that the leading cause of death in 2021 was COVID–19 for age groups between 35 and 64 years, it is reasonable to assume that many of these individuals were parents or caregivers of minors. In

²¹ The maximum years of longevity were 83.8 years in Chile, in the case of Japan or Qatar it was 87.6 years (UNDP, 2016).

TABLE 6. POPULATION WITHOUT ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES (PERCENTAGE AND MILLIONS OF PEOPLE)		
POBLACION POR EDAD	PORCENTAJE (%)	MILLONES DE PERSONAS
POPULATION FROM 6 TO 11 YEARS OLD	36.5%	4.7
POPULATION FROM 12 TO 17 YEARS OLD	33.5%	4.7

Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2025b)

this regard, it is known that 215,000 children and adolescents under the age of 18 were left orphaned of one parent. When considering another caregiver (primary or secondary), this figure rises to more than 318,000 minors in Mexico who lost someone responsible for their care at home (Sanchez & Sepulveda, 2024).

One way of analyzing the right to health is by starting with coverage for this particular stage of life. In this regard, it is necessary to monitor whether health governance has promoted or hindered access to services and, consequently, better health conditions. According to the latest available data, 4 out of every 10 children aged 6 to 11 years do not have access to health services (4.7 million). This percentage is slightly lower for adolescents aged 12 to 17 (1 out of every 3) (4.7 million) (INEGI, 2025b) (Table 6).

Based on these data, we can ascertain that at least 9.4 million children and adolescents are excluded from the health system, which leaves them without any care or follow-up in the face of latent risks such as illnesses, accidents and/or serious infections, as well as care and attention in cases of adolescent pregnancy, addictions, mental health problems and others that we will analyze later.

3 HEALTH CARE (VACCINATION, EARLY PREGNANCY)

From the previous section, we can conclude that 6 out of 10 children aged 6 to 11 and adolescents aged 12 to 17 have access to health services (63.5% and 66.5%, respectively). In addition to low coverage, there are barriers and challenges that children and adolescents face in health care (INEGI, 2025k).

In the case of adolescents (10 to 19 years old), proper adherence to the vaccination schedule is even more critical. The prevalence data from Mexico's Expanded Program on Immunization indicate which vaccines the adolescent population should receive and the results reveal that coverage rates were very low. The following chart shows that only 2 out of 10 adolescents (21.2%) are vaccinated against measles, 3



Image: "Teenage pregnancy in Mexico: a problem fueled by inequality" at https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/03/14/planeta_futuro/1552580422_784534.html

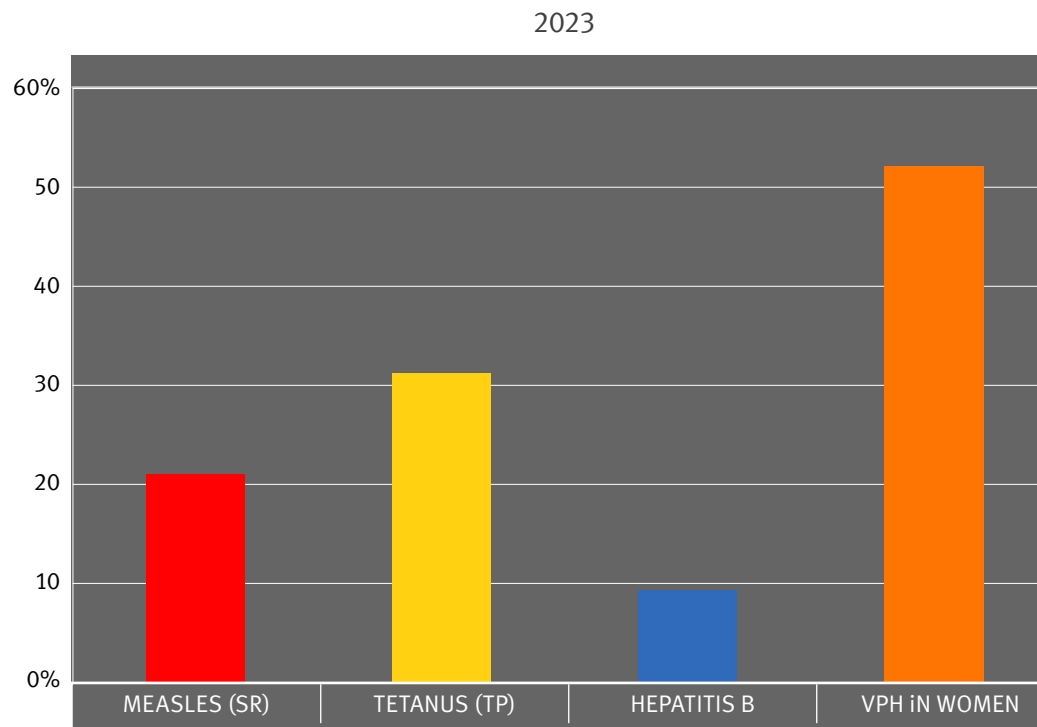
More than 245,000 births of women under 19 years of age were registered in Mexico in 2023 (INEGI, s.f.), which is a medical and a social problem.

out of 10 (31.2%) against tetanus and only 1 out of 10 (9.4%) against hepatitis B. In the case of the vaccine that prevents Human Papillomavirus (HPV)—which protects against some types of cancer, including cervical cancer in adolescent girls—it is reported that only 1 out of 2 (52.1%) received the vaccine (Shamah *et al.* 2024) (Graph 9).

Unfortunately, this coverage deficit has serious consequences, particularly for the child population, since they are especially vulnerable. When discussing immunizations (vaccines), it is important to note that in order to protect the entire population, the established coverage targets must be achieved.

There are several factors that contribute to the problem of low coverage, among them the lack of vaccine supply (Mongua-Rodriguez, 2023). In addition, factors such as limited accessibility to a health center (often due to lack of resources, time, geography, and/or lack of affiliation to such institutions), combined with long waiting times, contribute to incomplete vaccination schedules (Diaz-Ortega *et al.* 2013). Furthermore, the limited reach of immunization campaigns in rural areas means that a large portion of the child population does not complete their vaccination schedule properly. All of this highlights the

GRAPH 9. PERCENTAGE OF VACCINATION IN ADOLESCENTS
FROM 10 TO 19 YEARS OLD



Source: In-house elaboration with information from Ensanut (Shamah, *et al.* 2024).

current deficiencies in the health system regarding infrastructure, accessibility, resources and the effectiveness of immunization campaigns, which affect this and other stages of life.

In general, during adolescence, most people enjoy good health. However, sexual and reproductive health at these ages becomes highly relevant due to the risks and complications this population may face when engaging in sexual relations at an early age, without contraceptive protection, with multiple sexual partners and under the influence of substances and drugs, among other factors. This can lead to unwanted and/or unplanned pregnancies, complications during pregnancy and childbirth, abortions and babies born with low birth weight. All of this undermines physical growth and personal development, endangering not only the current health of the mother but also the long-term health of the baby. In our country, more than 245,000 births occurred in women under 19 years²² of age in 2023 (INEGI, n. d.), a serious medical and social problem. Adolescent pregnancy carries educational, economic and health risks. Preventing a girl or adolescent from becoming pregnant

²² The data for those under 15 years of age was 6,798 and for those between 15 and 19 years of age was 238,404 in 2023 (INEGI, n. d.).

EARLY PREGNANCY IN MEXICO

60 NEWBORN FOR EVERY THOUSAND ADOLESCENTS.

ONE OUT OF THREE WOMEN ADOLESCENTS BETWEEN 12 AND 19 YEARS OLD REPORTED HAVING BEEN PREGNANT (SHAMAH *ET AL.* 2024).

is a matter of human rights and is the key to accessing many other rights, such as the right to health, the right to continue studying and the right to better job opportunities (UN, 2020), among others.

In recent years, an increase has been observed in the precocity of the onset of sexual activity among youth, leading to a rise in the incidence of adolescent pregnancy. This phenomenon has placed Mexico in first place among the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), with a fertility rate of 60 births per 1,000 adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age²³. Although this is not

²³ The average for OECD member countries was 18 per 1,000 women between 15 and 19 years of age (World Bank n. d.) <https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador/SP.ADO.TFRT>

the only cause of the rise in adolescent pregnancies, it is undoubtedly a public health problem with economic and educational implications, which widens the social gap and permanently conditions the lives of young people.

In Mexico, 19.4% of adolescents initiate their sexual life between the ages of 12 and 19, and 29.7% of adolescent women aged 12 to 19 reported having been pregnant at least once (Shamah, *et al.* 2024). This entails economic and social costs, which we describe below. There are factors associated with inequality of opportunity that particularly affect women. We have identified that adolescent pregnancy specifically restricts the opportunities available to women at this stage of life. Some of the problems faced by pregnant adolescents can be observed in at least three dimensions: education, income and employment and labor activity. On the other hand, there are also costs for the State stemming from expenditures related to Adolescent Pregnancy (AP) and Early Motherhood (EM).

In an analysis of at least 15 countries, the United Nations Population Fund found that the greatest impact falls on women and their immediate environment (88%) of the total estimated cost²⁴, since they attain

²⁴ The impact on the State (12%).



Imagen: Mexico, first place in adolescent pregnancy among OECD countries at <https://regeneraion.mx/mexico-primer-lugar-en-embarazo-adolescente-entre-paises-de-la-ocde/>

An adolescent mother in Mexico has fewer opportunities for personal development and to provide better opportunities for her children, thereby perpetuating the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

lower levels of education and enter the labor market with fewer tools to access better jobs. This perpetuates the cycle of poverty and is a clear manifestation of inequality and gender gaps (UNFPA, 2025). Table 7 shows the impacts in the case of Mexico, where this phenomenon is replicated, as the impact on women is also greater than the impact on the State (68.1% vs. 31.9%). Moreover, the opportunity cost for the Mexican State amounts to more than 891 million dollars (76.34 billion pesos), representing 0.32% of GDP. This would be equivalent to the construction and equipping of 21 general hospitals, the construction of 9,600 schools each year, or financing the annual budget of public higher education institutions such as UNAM, IPN, UAM and Colmex (UNFPA, 2025) (Table 7).

In Mexico, the educational gap is highly significant between women who became mothers at an early age and those who became mothers in adulthood. Women who experienced adolescent motherhood have lower educational attainment. While women who became mothers in adulthood achieved higher levels of education (19% completed higher education), only 7% of those who experienced adolescent pregnancy reached this level of education (UNFPA, 2025). Likewise, educational limitations have consequences on

TABLE 7. TOTAL COST OF ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY (AP) AND EARLY MOTHERHOOD (EM) IN MEXICO, BY CATEGORY (MILLION DOLLARS)

ITEM	VALUE (MILLION DLS)	%
OPPORTUNITY COSTS OF AP AND EM ON:		
EDUCATION (A)	1,607	57.5%
EMPLOYMENT AND INACTIVITY (B)	104	3.7%
LABOR INCOME (C)	194	6.9%
OPPORTUNITY COST SUBTOTAL ON WOMEN	1,905	68.1%
COSTS FOR THE STATE		
PUBLIC SECTOR SPENDING ON AP CARE (D)	305.9	10.9%
TAX INCOME NOT RECEIVED FROM WORK (E)	585.6	20.9%
SUBTOTAL OF DIRECT COSTS FOR THE STATE	891.5	31.9%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR SOCIETY	2,796	100.0%

Source: In-house elaboration with data from UNFPA (2025).

labor income, since women who experienced early motherhood earn lower wages. On average, women who became mothers during adolescence earn 31.6% less. In terms of employment, women who experienced adolescent motherhood are more likely to hold precarious jobs. Among adolescent mothers, 67.4% have never contributed to social security institutions, compared with 56.8% of women who experienced pregnancy in adulthood (UNFPA, 2025).

Similarly, inactivity rates in Mexico are higher for women who became mothers during adolescence (44.8%) than for those who became mothers in adulthood (43.3%) (UNFPA, 2025). The economic impact of these educational limitations is reflected in a significant opportunity cost. Mexico, along with Panama and Colombia, faces the highest opportunity costs of Adolescent Pregnancy (AP) and Early Motherhood (EM) in education, with losses of 1.606 billion dollars in the case of Mexico and 1.029 billion and 754 million dollars for Panama and Colombia, respectively (UNFPA, 2025).

Moreover, our country reports a fiscal loss of around 585.6 million dollars due to early motherhood; this corresponds to foregone tax revenue from the income of women who were unable to work. These figures are

consistent with the high costs associated with informal employment and reduced labor opportunities for adolescent mothers in the country. According to the same report, adolescent pregnancy in Mexico also entails both social and political problems. The total economic impact of adolescent pregnancy on society (through lost income and employment) is nearly 63 billion pesos, and more than 11 billion pesos in lost tax revenues for the State, a cost equivalent to 0.27% of GDP (UNFPA, 2025).

Adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood perpetuate structural inequalities that disproportionately affect adolescents, particularly those living in poverty and with lower levels of education. The numbers reflect a difficult reality for many adolescents. An adolescent mother in Mexico has fewer opportunities for personal development and to provide better opportunities for her children, thereby perpetuating the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

Adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood perpetuate structural inequalities that disproportionately affect adolescents, particularly those living in poverty and with lower levels of education.

4 LEARNING: MINIMUM THRESHOLD? AND OUTCOMES

The analysis of future possibilities must also include learning outcomes. We know that without strong foundations, children and young people cannot thrive later in school or in the workplace, as they lack the skills and human capital necessary to advance their careers and economic opportunities (World Bank, 2019).

Although there is a global learning crisis, Mexico's case is even more concerning. According to the Human Capital Index, globally, the productivity of an average child born today is expected to reach only 56% of their full potential, compared with the maximum potential that could be achieved if countries invested adequately in health and education (World Bank, n. d.). For Mexico, this means that a child born under pre-pandemic conditions could expect to reach, on average, only 61% of their productivity as a potential worker (World Bank, 2021). In a changing market with increasingly innovative trends, the lack or limited presence of skills in children will make it very difficult for them to secure well-paid jobs in the future, which makes the quality of basic learning indispensable.

In Mexico and worldwide, there is a concerning learning crisis and in 2019 an approximation of this term

was provided. Learning poverty is defined as the inability to read and understand a simple text by age 10 and the figure for Latin America and the Caribbean indicated that 1 in 2 children (51%) were in learning poverty; the figure for Mexico was 43% (World Bank, 2019). After the pandemic, these figures rose alarmingly, reaching up to 79% in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2022 (under an intermediate scenario) and up to 81.1% in a more extreme context (World Bank *et al.* 2022). In this sense, the lag in basic learning²⁵ places a very high proportion of students at risk of failing, dropping out, experiencing educational setbacks and facing social exclusion. When analyzing how this situation has affected children and young people in Mexico, we find even more concerning data.

Even before the pandemic, estimates from the Independent Learning Assessment (Medición Independiente de los Aprendizajes, MIA) in 2018 revealed that in the state of Yucatan, 70.7% of 3rd grade primary students were unable to read aloud a simple 2nd grade story; nearly 65% of 3rd grade students could not correctly solve two-digit subtraction problems; and more than 86% of 5th grade students could not

²⁵ It is defined as the lack of expected learning with respect to the age and school grade of the learners, including the most basic and fundamental learning (Hevia and Vergara-Lope, 2018).

Before the pandemic, estimates from the Independent Learning Assessment (MIA) already showed alarming signs.

In 2018 in the state of Yucatan, 70.7% of 3rd grade primary students were unable to read aloud a simple 2nd grade text.

solve a problem involving basic mathematical operations (MIA, n. d.) (Table 8).

This accumulation of disadvantages adds to the setbacks left by the pandemic. The COVID generation implied much more than the mere loss of learning. At this stage, knowledge and skills related to academic progress were lost due to prolonged gaps or discontinuities in students’ education. This learning loss is reflected in the lack of retention of general knowledge among students and the stagnation of their academic progress. It represented a double loss: 1) previously acquired learning (deterioration) and 2) the opportunity cost of lost learning (the learning that should have taken place but did not due to school closures) (Hevia, Vergara-Lope & Velasquez, 2024).

In Mexico, using the Enlace test, it was estimated that a 60–day school closure could reduce learning by 24% (de Hoyos, 2020). For their part, Monroy-Gomez, Velez-Grajales & Lopez-Calva (2021) argued that a learning loss equivalent to one-third of a school year translates, in the short term, into a total learning loss equivalent to an entire school year further along in students’ educational careers. This assumes that the distance education policy was fully effective; otherwise, in the short term, the loss increases to a full

TABLE 8. LEARNING EVALUATION IN YUCATAN
2018

EVALUATION	DESCRIPTION	RESULT
MIA READING	Reading a simple story	70.7% of 3rd grade students were unable to read aloud a simple story from 2nd grade. 27% OF 6TH GRADE STUDENTS NEITHER.
MIA COMPRE- HENSION	Simple text comprehension	83.8% of 3rd grade students were unable to solve subtraction with carry from 2nd grade. 35.8% OF 6TH GRADE STUDENTS.
MIA MATH (SUBSTRAC- TION)	Substraction solutions	64.9% of 3rd grade students were unable to solve subtraction with carry from 2nd grade. 64.9% OF 6TH GRADE STUDENTS NEITHER.
MIA MATEMATICAS (PROBLEMA)	Difficulties in applying math operatiions to practical problems	86.1% of 5th grade students failed to solve a 4th grade problem that involves the use of two basic mathematical operations 80.3% OF 6TH GRADE STUDENTS NEITHER.

Source: In-house elaboration with information from MIA (n.d).

school year and becomes a loss of two years of learning in the long term. This disproportionately affected the southern region of the country, where the impact was three times greater than in the central region.

In 2022, the results of the PISA test (OECD, 2023) showed a decline in learning across various areas. This was a phenomenon already warned about by Signos Vitales (2023) and one that has deepened in this latest assessment. The results show that in 2022, performance in mathematics decreased compared to 2018; only one-third of 15-year-old students mastered basic mathematical competencies. Only half of students demonstrated mastery in science and reading competencies (OECD, 2023).

According to the data, these losses were much deeper among the poorest. In the case of mathematics, 43 out of every 100 students living in the most vulnerable conditions (quintile I) are at level 0 of PISA, meaning they do not possess the minimum expected learning for their age (OECD, 2023). In addition, 38% of the same socioeconomic group can only identify information and carry out procedures with direct instructions, while this percentage is lower (27%) among higher-income students (quintile V) (OECD, 2023). In the case of Reading, results also show greater im-

pact among disadvantaged groups. In Mexico, 64 out of every 100 students in quintile I are at Level 1 of PISA, which means they cannot find or understand information in a text. This percentage is lower among higher-income students (20% of those in quintile V) (OECD, 2023).

Moreover, in Mexico there was no strategy of remedial courses to compensate for the learning losses during the pandemic, exposing students to deeper setbacks and even school dropout. The consequences are more severe in the early years of education. It is estimated that, without remedial courses, the loss of learning among third-grade primary students due to three months of school closures would have repercussions for up to 72% of students, who by tenth grade would either have dropped out of school or would not be able to achieve minimum learning outcomes (United Nations, 2020). The lag in the development of these and other competencies implies a loss of opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills, continue educational trajectories and successfully transition into the labor market.

In 2022, the results of the PISA test showed a decline in learning across various areas and have deepened even more than in 2018.

15-year old students performance:

» *Mathematics. 30% achieved basic competencies*

» *Sciences and reading. 50% demonstrated mastery (OCDE, 2023).*

5 TEXTBOOKS, SCHOOL DROPOUT AND THE COST OF LEARNING GAPS IN BASIC EDUCATION

Another key factor in understanding the status of equal opportunities in relation to education is the absence of an educational approach that emphasizes basic learning, particularly in reading and mathematics. These are fundamental for subsequent learning and for the possibility of successfully participating in society. The lack of such an approach is clearly reflected in the poor quality of the free textbooks introduced beginning in 2023. These changes generated significant controversy and concern for disregarding basic principles of pedagogy, which will ultimately result in a limitation in the scope of school learning that education has always aimed to achieve.

At Signos Vitales (2024), we have found that these changes significantly reduce learning related to systematic thinking. For example, in the case of mathematics, there used to be a textbook with 222 pages for first grade of primary school (Reyes & Fernandez, 2023), whereas the new book from the New Mexican School, titled “Multiple Languages,” covers a variety of topics mainly through comic strips, with only 12 pages addressing mathematical content. There are no clear definitions or problems to solve; instead,

topics are treated at a recreational level that neither connects concepts nor develops mathematical skills (Rojas, 2024).

In the case of the new textbook titled *Our Knowledge*, it resembles a dictionary format that defines a few mathematical concepts, such as symmetry, number line and tables, across just 8 pages. Topics such as decimals and angles are mentioned without any practical exercises. There are also errors in mathematical definitions and their applications (Rojas, 2024). Moreover, important topics are missing in the first grade curriculum, such as the monetary system, hundreds, weight, capacity, time, lengths, additive problems and addition and subtraction as algorithms—gaps that will persist throughout their educational path. In sixth grade, children have lost 180 pages of necessary mathematical knowledge for secondary school, replaced by only about 20 pages without problem-solving exercises (Rojas, 2024).

The setbacks and learning losses caused by the pandemic, as well as those expected in the future due to the severe lack of attention to basic learning, are difficult to calculate, although some estimates exist. At the global level, a future loss of income is projected due to school closures, representing between 12 and

The modification of the free text books of the "New Mexican School" significantly reduce learning related to systematic thinking (Signos Vitales, 2024)

18% of current global GDP. In the case of middle-income countries (such as Mexico), the loss ranges between 15 and 22% of current GDP (Psacharopoulos *et al.* 2020).

On the other hand, school retention is also a problem. Basic education as a whole shows constant declines in school enrollment. According to SEP data, there has been an absolute loss of more than 537,000 students in preschool (–11.2%); more than 817,000 in primary school (–5.9%); and more than 189,000 in secondary school (–2.9%) for the 2023–2024 school year compared to the 2018–2019 school year. In the case of upper secondary education, the absolute variation was more than 136,000 students (–2.6%) (Table 9).

The previous outlook worsens when analyzing the transition from lower secondary to Upper Secondary Education or High School. According to the School of Government and Public Transformation at the Monterrey Institute of Technology, out of every 80 students who graduate from lower secondary, only 54 complete high school (IEEC–Mexico Evalua, 2024). Data from the Ministry of Public Education (DGPY-EE, n. d.) indicate that in the 2023–2024 school year, 1.726 million students graduated. However, the number of new enrollments in Upper Secondary Educa-

TABLE 9. ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS
(GROWTH RATE)

SCHOOL YEAR	PUBLIC SCHOOLS	PRIVATE SCHOOLS
2018–2019	–	–
2019–2020	–1.0	–0.8
2020–2021	–0.8	–16.7
2021–2022	–2.1	–0.6
2022–2023	–1.1	10.2
2023–2024	–1.2	2.4
2024–2025	–2.6	–0.2

Source: In-house elaboration with information from MIA (s.f).

tion (2024–2025 cycle) was 1.644 million. This means that 82,443 young people did not continue their studies. The following table shows the number of lower secondary graduates by school year and the number of newly enrolled students in the subsequent cycle. Ideally, there should be no student losses; however, in each school year we observe that young people are leaving school between the end of lower secondary and entry into upper secondary. This occurs despite the “universalization” of scholarships for students promoted by the policy of former President Lopez Obrador, which revealed more resources but less equity. The promise of reaching everyone did not translate into progress for those who needed it most. Among young people aged 15 to 17 from the most vulnerable quintile (Quintile I) attending a public high school, 41.7% still did not receive a scholarship in 2022. Today, nearly half of the support is concentrated among higher-income students. In 2024, 43.2% of the most privileged students (Quintile V) received a scholarship, while only 31.4% of the most vulnerable students (Quintile I) did so (INEGI, 2025) (Table 10).

The interruption of studies is the result of a long process of disconnection between the student and the educational system (Roman, 2013). This can limit employment opportunities, lead to greater economic

TABLE 10. NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AND ADMISSIONS TO EMS BY SCHOOL YEAR

SCHOOL CYCLE	SECONDARY GRADUATES	SCHOOL CYCLE	INCOME EMS	LOSS
2018–2019	1,787,880	2019–2020	1,627,879	–160,001
2019–2020	1,764,148	2020–2021	1,535,900	–228,248
2020–2021	1,795,239	2021–2022	1,530,783	–264,456
2021–2022	1,829,429	2022–2023	1,662,321	–167,108
2022–2023	1,811,290	2023–2024	1,654,348	–156,942
2023–2024	1,726,811	2024–2025	1,644,368	–82,443

Source: In-house elaboration with data from DGPYEE (s.f).

vulnerability and less autonomy to develop as an individual and even undermine the exercise of citizenship (Fernandez & Lopez, 2024).

Despite the bleak outlook, we do not identify clear actions on the part of the Government aimed at reducing the inequalities that constrain educational trajectories, where even the implementation of educational scholarships has failed to curb school dropout. Resistance to or ignorance of this and other problems will deepen the gaps even further. Fortunately, civil society has managed to respond and act with measures to mitigate the problem and has succeeded in linking its efforts with the Ministry of Public Education in at least 19 states. This is the case of the Independent Learning Assessment (MIA)²⁶, whose mission is to improve education and basic learning outcomes for children and adolescents through innovation, collaborative work and citizen participation. It has achieved important progress and results in favor of the education of children and young people. These efforts have reached more than 340,000 children and adolescents in at least 22 states through Learning Camps and by

²⁶ It is a Special Program of the Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology, Gulf Unit (CIESAS-Gulf) and the Education Research Institute of the University of Veracruzana (IIE-UV).

training more than 88,000 teachers to improve their pedagogical practices (MIA, n. d.).

Within these collaborations, it has been identified that under actions for improvement (Citizen-led assessments²⁷), the weaknesses in school performance include teaching/learning methods that are not child-friendly; shortcomings or deficiencies in textbooks; low parental and community participation in the life of learning spaces; and deficits in teacher training, among others (Hevia, Vergara-Lope & Velasquez, 2024).

Civil society has managed to respond and act with measures to mitigate the problem and has succeeded in linking its efforts with the Ministry of Public Education in at least 19 states (Independent Learning Assessment (MIA)).

²⁷ In Mexico, the innovations of Citizen-Led Assessments (CDE) and “Teaching at the Appropriate Level” have been adapted and developed, allowing information to be collected from more than 20,235 children and adolescents. Furthermore, under the development of Camps in various modalities, which were incorporated into the National Strategy to Promote Educational Trajectories and Improve the Learning of Basic Education Students, reaching more than 300,000 students (Hevia, Vergara-Lope and Velasquez, 2024).

6 POVERTY AND EDUCATION FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

Young people from low-income backgrounds are more likely to drop out of school not so much because of their current low income, but rather because during their early years they did not receive early childhood services to ensure their early childhood development (ECD) and later attended a school system that provides the poorest and most vulnerable in Mexico with the most precarious education (De Hoyos, Cuevas & Jamison, 2020). Being out of the educational system limits employment opportunities, which interrupts the development of the skills and competencies necessary for life and work. In Latin America and Mexico, being a young person who neither studies nor works is associated with poverty. Two out of three of them in the region come from the 40% poorest households.

The greater likelihood of falling into the condition of neither studying nor working among young people from poor households and the negative effect this has on their future income, shows that the phenomenon of youth who neither study nor work is one of the mechanisms through which income inequality and poverty are transmitted from generation to generation (De Hoyos, 2016). Preventive policies are always



Image: "About 3.2 million children work" at <https://proceso.hn/unos-3-2-millones-de-ninos-trabajan-en-mexico-para-huir-de-la-pobreza/>

the most effective. Early childhood development interventions, especially among children from poor or vulnerable households, are the most efficient in generating basic cognitive and socio-emotional skills. This reduces school dropout and unemployment among young people.

The historically most vulnerable populations include persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples and women. We know that poverty affects Indigenous peoples 2.3 times more (60.8%) than the non-Indige-

A child who completed primary education in a school of very high marginalization has only a 15% probability of finishing high school six years later, and if they do, their learning outcomes are about 50 points below the national average.

nous population (26.1%) (INEGI, 2025k). In the case of people with disabilities, this percentage is also higher (32.9%) compared to people without disabilities (29.3%) (INEGI, 2025k).

Considering the poorest of the poor (extreme poverty), these percentages highlight even more the gaps. In 2024, the proportion of Indigenous people living in extreme poverty was 22.9%, compared to 3.4% among non-Indigenous people—6.7 times higher. In the case of people with disabilities, 6.2% were in extreme poverty, while for people without disabilities this percentage was lower (5.3%). These conditions are even more adverse for Indigenous women living in poverty and extreme poverty (62% and 23.5%, respectively), compared to Indigenous men (59.5% and 22.3%, respectively) (INEGI, 2025k).

Equal opportunity means leveling access to a dignified life trajectory that fully exercises social rights. In a context where poverty is a counterforce, guaranteeing basic learning outcomes is an indispensable tool for the future. However, we continue to find that children who attended primary schools in areas of very high marginalization score 96 points lower in learning assessments than their peers who attended schools in areas of very low marginalization. This difference

is equivalent to more than two years of schooling. Moreover, a child who completed primary school in a school of very high marginalization has only a 15% probability of finishing high school six years later, and if they do, their learning outcomes are about 50 points below the national average. In comparison, a child who completed primary school in a school of very low marginalization has more than double the probability (35%) of graduating from high school six years later, and if they do, their learning outcomes will be 15 points above the national average (De Hoyos, 2018). These inequalities shape the lives of children and young people in Mexico. Their roots lie in early childhood. Rather than addressing inequalities in children's early years, we condemn them to truncated trajectories in poor schools, pushing them toward a life of precariousness.

In this regard, the Full-Time Schools Program (PETC) in Mexico fulfilled these functions to some extent. Evidence even showed positive effects on children's well-being derived from the PETC program, on educational achievement and learning, as well as through the availability of food services and reductions in marginalization. Among those who received food services, significant and positive results were found in reducing repetition and educational lag rates (re-

Four out of 10 public basic education schools lack at least one of the following services: potable water, electricity, independent restrooms and/or sinks.

In the case of private schools, this figure was lower (8 out of 100).

ductions of 0.13 pp and 0.49 pp, respectively) in primary education (Coneval, 2020).

Unfortunately, the PETC is no longer in operation. The policies implemented appear to be moving in the opposite direction, as the restructuring of childcare support programs has failed to ensure equitable and quality access for children as the now-defunct Full-Time Schools once did. This ended support for food and education for 3.6 million children and adolescents, putting at risk the educational opportunities of this stage of life²⁸ (Mexicanos Primero, 2022). Available data indicate that the recovery of educational trajectories requires the development of remedial and reinforcement actions for learning, nutrition and health, with a stronger focus on the most vulnerable. It is essential to deliberately seek out children and young people who have dropped out of school, understand the causes, and implement remedies to stop school dropout, as well as strengthen the quality of learning outcomes.

²⁸This increased the educational risks (learning time), the risks of increasing inequality (affects the most vulnerable communities) and undermined the commitment to comprehensive education, since the ETC addressed nutritional, cultural and sports aspects.

7 OUR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS

In this context, it is essential to analyze the conditions under which schools operate. What is the current situation of the schools serving children and youth? We know that 4 out of 10 public basic education schools lack at least one of the following services: potable water, electricity, independent restrooms and/or sinks. In the case of private schools, this figure was lower (8 out of 100). In addition, 65 out of 100 public schools lack computers or internet, while the proportion is lower for private schools (19 out of 100) (Mexico Evalua & Tec de Monterrey, 2024b).

The availability of basic services such as water or electricity has a greater impact on community and Indigenous schools. Inequalities in infrastructure indicate that 27% of Indigenous schools did not have water for restrooms, compared to 4.5% of general (urban or semi-urban) schools. Similarly, 84% of Indigenous schools lacked adequate furniture for the operation of a library and 53% of schools lacked sports fields. Only 37% of basic education schools are adapted to such needs, and only 25% have adapted materials for use.

All of these deficiencies persist despite the fact that more than 451 billion pesos have been spent on ed-

The Full-Time Schools Program (PETC) showed positive effects on children's well-being, on educational achievement and learning, as well as through the availability of food services and reductions in marginalization.

educational infrastructure between 2013 and 2024 (Mexico Evalua & Tec de Monterrey, 2024b). To appreciate the scale of the challenge of improving Mexican schools, we know that 87% of basic education schools nationwide are public (2023–2024 school year), which expands the responsibility of the State in terms of infrastructure.

Even though between 2013 and 2024 a total of 451,230 million pesos were allocated to school infrastructure across the three educational levels—316,579 million pesos to basic education (70.2%); 34,892 million pesos to upper secondary education (7.7%); and 99,759 million pesos to higher education (22.1%)—the quality of facilities remains poor. Despite the existence of earmarked funds for school infrastructure, in the last 12 years the destination of 320 billion pesos for basic education infrastructure is unknown. This represents 2 out of every 3 pesos invested in school infrastructure. The importance of providing educational spaces lies in the impact this has on the quality of learning. The disparities outlined above generate inequalities between regions, particularly affecting rural areas where educational infrastructure continues to be deficient, limiting opportunities for academic development and perpetuating educational inequality.

8 OPPORTUNITY COST OF NOT STUDYING

The labor force participation rate of the population aged 12 to 14 has decreased. Between 2005 and 2012 there was an accelerated decline in this participation, but since then the reduction has been slower. In the first quarter of 2025, 4.9% of young people in this age group were in the labor market, whether seeking employment or working (INEGI, 2025g). A very strong incentive may be that the unemployment rate is extremely low and has been trending downward for two decades. In the first quarter of 2025, only 6 out of every 1,000 people in this age group (0.6%) who were part of the labor force were unemployed (INEGI, 2025g). It is highly likely that an adolescent entering the labor market will find a job.

The labor force participation rate of the population aged 12 to 14 is related to high levels of poverty. The states with the highest prevalence of poverty—Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla, Tabasco and Campeche—show the highest levels of labor force participation in this age group: 7.4%, 12.6%, 11.7%, 7.4%, 7.1% and 10.7% of their respective populations (INEGI, 2025g). This group also includes Colima, Michoacan and Nayarit, with participation rates of 8.7%, 7.7% and 7.5%, respectively (INEGI, 2025g). Labor

The states with the highest prevalence of poverty—Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla, Tabasco and Campeche—show the highest levels of labor force participation: 7.4%, 12.6%, 11.7%, 7.4%, 7.1% and 10.7% of their respective populations between 12 and 14 years old (INEGI, 2025g).

participation in the southern and northern regions shows the greatest contrast. The south accounts for 40.5% of the labor market of those aged 12 to 14 nationwide (INEGI, 2025g).

On the other hand, at this stage of life, the choice between working and studying is sufficiently clear. In the first quarter of 2025, 64.2% of adolescents in the labor market, whether working or seeking employment, were also studying. However, 35.8% of adolescents in the labor market had abandoned their studies (INEGI, 2025g). Since the second half of 2012, this relationship has shown a clear upward trend. This translates into a smaller number of 12- to 14-year-olds in the labor market, but the probability that they will drop out of school is now greater than it was a decade ago.

Government support for adolescent youth has grown marginally, while school attendance has declined. Between the first quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2025, coverage of government transfers to adolescents grew by 3.4% (or 68,977 adolescents), increasing from 29.7% to 30.2% of the total. At the same time, in the first quarter of 2025, 98.7% of support (2,050,325 adolescents receiving government assistance) reached the population attending school. How-



Image: do not study and do not work Photo: EFE/Sashenka Gutierrez) at <https://www.infobae.com/america/mexico/2021/09/23/quienes-son-los-ninis-y-por-que-causan-tanto-revuelo-en-el-gobierno-de-Lopez-Obrador/>

ever, the increase in support was not accompanied by growth in school attendance. In the same period, the population of adolescents not attending school rose from 350,015 to 386,974 (a 10.6% increase), while the population attending school grew by only 1.3% (an increase of 84,439 youth). The result is that the attendance rate declined from 94.8% to 94.4%.

The events described above have coincided with growth in the population of 12- to 14-year-olds outside the labor market, known as the non-economically active population (NEAP). In the past decade,

progress was considerable. Between the last quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2025, progress slowed, rising from 93.1% to 95.1% of the total population (INEGI, 2025g). It should be noted that much of this (positive) change is due to the reduction in the youth population. Between the last quarter of 2014 and the first quarter of 2025, the number of young people in the NEAP increased by 37,645 (0.6%), but the total youth population declined by 126,101 (−1.8%) (INEGI, 2025g).

Unfortunately, part of this population does not enter the education system. Since 2014 it has been clear that the exit from the labor market has been accompanied by an increasing number of young people not joining the education system. In the last quarter of 2014, young people who neither studied nor worked reached a minimum of 2.9% (191,452 youth). Since then and by the first quarter of 2025, this proportion had risen to 4.1% (266,675 youth)—an increase of 75,223 (INEGI, 2025g). Over the same period, the increase in youth in this condition was 39.3%. In other words, the social loss is greater, as the exit from the labor market has not been accompanied by increased demand for education.

This also suggests that, for this age group, school dropout is not entirely explained by income poverty, especially when considering the particularities of each region. Young people do not only abandon their studies to seek employment to compensate for low household income. The most illustrative cases are the states of Chiapas and Chihuahua, with contrasting social and economic conditions. As of today, Chiapas has 28,047 and Chihuahua 1,906 young people who are part of the Economically Active Population (EAP), respectively, but also 74,704 and 11,247 youth, respectively, who are not part of the EAP and do not attend school (INEGI, 2025g).

School dropout rates are much higher than employment rates. That is, adolescent dropout is not necessarily due to greater labor force participation. In the cases of Chiapas and Chihuahua, for every adolescent entering the labor market, there are 2.7 and 5.9, respectively, who neither study nor work. However, this phenomenon seems to be more strongly associated with northern states, considering that labor participation in that region is among the lowest in the country.

Adolescent dropout is not necessarily due to greater labor force participation. In the cases of Chiapas and Chihuahua, for every adolescent entering the labor market, there are 2.7 and 5.9, respectively, who neither study nor work.

9 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: CHILD LABOR

Child labor is a significant issue in Mexico, with substantial implications for the country's social and economic development. By definition, child labor includes the participation of boys and girls in activities that are not appropriate for their stage of development, whether due to their danger, intensity, or because they interfere with their education. Within this framework, two types of child labor are defined:

- » Prohibited occupation: activities carried out by children under 15 years of age.
- » Domestic chores under inadequate conditions: unpaid tasks within the household that may pose risks to the health and/or safety of those who perform them.

According to UNICEF, many of these activities limit the exercise of fundamental rights such as access to education and the right to a life free from violence. These conditions, in addition to hindering children's comprehensive development, can generate long-term effects on their life trajectory. As a consequence, the workforce becomes less skilled in the long run, resulting in higher costs for health, education and social protection systems (UNICEF, n. d.).



Image: "Child labor in Mexico: prohibit is not enough" at <https://www.gaceta.unam.mx/trabajo-infantil-en-mexico-prohibir-no-es-suficiente/>

With respect to the legal framework, the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States (CPEUM) prohibits employment for children under 15 years of age²⁹. Likewise, the General Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (LGDNNA) stipulates a total of 20 rights that safeguard their integrity; among others, these rights include the obligation of all levels of government to take measures to prevent, address, or sanction cases in which children are affected by child labor (Government of Mexico, 2018). The Federal La-

²⁹ Article 123 of the CPEUM.

bor Law (LFT), for its part, establishes the absolute prohibition of child labor and assigns responsibilities to the authorities to prevent and sanction prohibited practices. Thus, the LFT stipulates that companies hiring children under 15 years of age may be fined between 250 and 5,000 times the Unit of Measure and Update; this translates to an approximate value between 27,000 and 540,000 pesos. Meanwhile, the Federal Penal Code even establishes prison sentences of one to four years. In addition to these sanctions, the Public Prosecutor's Office has the authority to initiate criminal proceedings when there is evidence of labor exploitation, hazardous work, or human trafficking (Campos, 2025). Internationally, Mexico has ratified the main ILO instruments, which set the minimum age for employment at 15 and prohibit the worst forms of child labor³⁰. Moreover, since 1990, Mexico has been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which establishes protection against any form of work that undermines the comprehensive development of children (UNICEF, 2019), and has committed, under the framework of the 2030 Agenda, to meeting SDG Target 8, which calls for the elimination of child labor in all its forms by 2025.

³⁰Convention 138 sets the minimum age for admission to employment at 15 years, and Convention 182 prohibits the worst forms of child labor (ILO n. d.).

Nevertheless, child labor remains a reality in Mexico. According to data from the 2022 ENTI, there were 28.4 million children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 in Mexico. Of these, 3.7 million— 1 in every 8, or 13.1%— were engaged in child labor (INEGI, 2023). This figure is higher compared to child labor rates in 2015 (12.3%) and 2017 (11%). Considering the two types of child labor, significant gender differences can be observed: while most girls were engaged in domestic work under prolonged hours and without pay (59.7%), 58.8% of boys performed prohibited occupations (Salas, 2025).

In addition, it is important to highlight that 2.1 million children and adolescents engaged in child labor were not attending school. Regarding prohibited labor, 42.7% of boys and 32.8% of girls were not enrolled in school (Salas, 2025). Save the Children reports in its Atlas of Child Labor that only 7 out of 10 children engaged in domestic labor under inadequate conditions attended school. The Atlas also highlights that more than 50% of children aged 5 to 9 and 95% of adolescents aged 14 to 17 worked in the informal sector. According to the same source, poverty stands out as the primary factor driving child labor, followed by lack of access to education and the prevalence of informal work (Save the Children, 2024).

Child labor remains a reality in Mexico.

In 2022, there were 28.4 million children and adolescents aged 5 to 17. Of these, 3.7 million —1 in every 8, or 13.1%— were engaged in child labor (INEGI, 2023). This figure is higher compared to child labor rates in 2015 (12.3%) and 2017 (11%).

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY?

With these alarming figures, child labor represents a significant obstacle to social mobility. The implications are manifold:

- » Human capital impact: As shown by INEGI and Save the Children, informal work prevents access to or continuity in education. Consequently, children's learning, skills and future opportunities are affected. The latest INEGI data indicate that the 1.6 million children engaged in child labor who were also studying spent on average six hours less per day on education than children who did not work. As a result, their permanence in the education system is affected. Although there are no specific data on educational completion rates, several sources indicate that school dropout rates increase significantly between ages 12 and 14.
- » Generational cycle of poverty: With 95% of children engaged in informal jobs, they earn low incomes and risk excluding their own future children from the education system, perpetuating intergenerational low socioeconomic status. According to INEGI data, 9 out of 10 children in 2022 earned up to one minimum wage or no income at all from their work (INEGI, 2023).

- » Extreme prevalence of labor informality: Informal jobs lack labor rights and social security, excluding 95% of the 3.7 million working children and adolescents from the system.

MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION?

Given the extensive body of legislation and the alarming figures on child labor in Mexico, it is worth examining the measures implemented to improve conditions for children. Since 2014, federal-level Offices for the Protection of Children and Adolescents have been created to coordinate protection measures and to provide representation in legal and administrative proceedings. Although specialized offices exist in each federal entity, it is important to note that they do not have police or judicial powers to sanction cases of child labor. Furthermore, several sources indicate that the actual effectiveness of these institutions has been limited by insufficient resources and a low percentage of verified cases. In addition, there are no specific figures on child labor cases brought directly before these offices, as such data are generally reported in aggregate form as part of INEGI's National Child Labor Survey (ENTI) and are not disaggregated by institution. This reveals inadequate protection and restitution of children's rights.

On the other hand, it can be acknowledged that the new National Development Plan 2025–2030, for the first time in history, includes explicit strategies to address this issue. However, their implementation has not yet materialized. At the state level, experts highlight some best practices: in Queretaro, a Protocol for the Detection, Prevention and Attention to Child Labor was implemented; in the State of Mexico, child labor is addressed through inter-municipal cooperation; and in Chiapas, workshops and forums were established in collaboration with universities and civil society to raise awareness of the problem. Nevertheless, these examples remain exceptions and lack structural support (Sandi, 2025). Moreover, public budgeting represents a fundamental tool in the effort to improve the situation of children, as it reflects the government's commitment to guaranteeing their rights.

That said, CIEP identified in the 2025 Federal Expenditure Budget (PEF) a 7.9% reduction in the allocation to Responsible Units that carry out actions against child labor in Mexico compared to 2024. Furthermore, in 2024 only 58.6% of the allocated budget was actually spent, reflecting a significant gap between financial planning and execution (CIEP, 2025b). Additionally, experts have emphasized that there are no specific budgetary programs for the

Millions of children and adolescents do not attend school, and their development opportunities diminish. As long as the structural causes are not addressed, children's fundamental rights will continue to be undermined and social and economic inequality will persist (Campos, 2025).



Imagen: UNICEF Mexico/Verdespina "UNICEF: It is urgent to strengthen the protection of girls, boys and adolescents in Mexico in the face of the increase in violence against children" at <https://www.unicef.org/mexico/comunicados-prensa/unicef-urge-reforzar-la-proteccion-de-ni%C3%B1as-y-adolescentes-en-m%C3%A9xico-ante>

eradication of child labor, despite the high number of children affected.

Finally, it should be noted that there are no updated official data after the 2022 ENTI, and the Government of Mexico has not published child labor figures after 2023. Similarly, there are no publicly available updated data on corporate sanctions, making it difficult to assess the impact of the measures implemented. Although several experts estimate that by 2025 the number of children in child labor could rise to between 4.0 and 4.5 million, the limited availability of data not only hinders analysis but also undermines prospects for improvement. Based on the information presented on the 2025 PEF as one of the few available indicators, all evidence suggests that Mexico will not achieve the eradication of child labor in the short term.

In summary, despite international agreements and the existence of a robust national regulatory framework, child labor remains a structural problem in Mexico. As shown, many children and adolescents do not attend school, and their development opportunities diminish. In other words, child labor is directly linked to lack of access to education and to social and economic inequalities (Campos, 2025). And as long

as the structural causes of child labor are not addressed, children's fundamental rights will continue to be undermined and social and economic inequality will persist.

10 HOW VIOLENCE IMPACTS DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDY SINALOA

In addition to child labor, which directly affects the social mobility of children and adolescents in Mexico, violence has become a determining factor in assessing their development opportunities. Complementing the aforementioned legislation, the rights of children and adolescents are protected under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges the government to ensure the protection and care necessary to guarantee their comprehensive well-being. Likewise, Articles 32 to 35 of the Convention detail the obligation to protect children against various forms of violence and exploitation, as well as to safeguard them from any other form of exploitation that may negatively affect their well-being in any dimension (Redim, 2025b).

Nevertheless, according to UNICEF reports, “unfortunately, in Mexico, corporal punishment, psychological aggression, and other humiliating forms of treat-

ment are considered normal and are widely accepted, both as methods of discipline and as forms of everyday interaction” (UNICEF, n. d. a). Data confirm this observation: according to INEGI, in 2023, 22,410 cases of child victims of violence were recorded in Mexico. At the same time, 321 individuals aged 0 to 15 lost their lives due to assaults. It is worth emphasizing that available data only reflect reported cases of violence or those involving requests for assistance, so the dark figure of child violence is estimated to be much higher.

At the same time, according to crime incidence data from the National Public Security System’s Executive Secretariat (SESNSP), more crimes against individuals aged 0 to 17 were reported between January and December 2024 than during the same months in 2023. As of May 2025, the SESNSP reports a total of 16,600 child and adolescent crime victims (SESNSP, 2025). Another report from UNICEF indicates that 63% of the 38 million children and adolescents suffer physical and psychological abuse as part of their upbringing (Lugo, 2025). Furthermore, violence against children in Mexico and its impact on social mobility cannot be analyzed in isolation from organized crime. As analyzed in previous reports by Signos Vitales, organized crime has gained ground in Mexico, resulting



Image: "Classes are suspended in four municipalities of Sinaloa". Photo Jose Betanzos / Cuartoscuro / La Jornada at <https://www.jornada.com.mx/noticia/2024/09/12/estados/suspenden-clases-en-cuatro-municipios-de-sinaloa-tras-violencia-8295>

in unprecedented homicide rates. In addition, recent data indicate that between 145,000 and 250,000 minors in Mexico are at risk of being recruited by criminal groups (El Economista, 2025). How does violence affect children and adolescents in Mexico? What impacts does violence have on the social mobility of this population group? The following case study seeks to provide some data and answers.

CASE STUDY: SINALOA

According to data from the Office of the Attorney General of the State of Sinaloa (2025), between September 9, 2024 —the date marking the onset of the violence crisis due to disputes among organized crime groups— and December 31, 2024, approximately 655 intentional homicides were recorded in the state. In 2025, the Ministry of Security and Citizen Protection (SSPC), reported a total of 686 intentional homicides between January 1 and June 30 (SSPC, 2025), while the State Prosecutor’s Office documented a total of 885 homicides. Furthermore, the State Human Rights Commission of Sinaloa (CEDH) recorded more than 1,500 disappearances in 2025 up to July 9 (Nieblas, 2025). According to Coparmex, the wave of violence has cost Sinaloa around 30 billion pesos, with an estimated loss of approximately 15,000 formal jobs (Nieblas, 2025). In the peace index, prepared by the Institute for Economics and Peace, the state fell to 22nd place out of 32 (Nordahl, 2025).

Press reports indicate that since September 2024, more than 50 minors have been killed. According to information provided by the Sinaloa Prosecutor’s Office, the main victims have been adolescents aged 15 to 17 (Table 11).

TABLA 11. HOMICIDE VICTIMS IN SINALOA
(1–17 YEARS OLAD)
SEPTEMBER 2024 TO JULY 2025

AGE	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF VICTIMS
2 – 5 YEARS	3
6 – 9 AÑOS	6
10 – 14 AÑOS	8
15 – 17 AÑOS	40
TOTAL	57

Source: In-house elaboration with information from Salas (2025b) and General Coordination CESP (s.f.).

**At least 2 cases correspond to girls murdered in contexts of family violence. Some adolescents between 15 and 17 years old were allegedly linked to organized crime

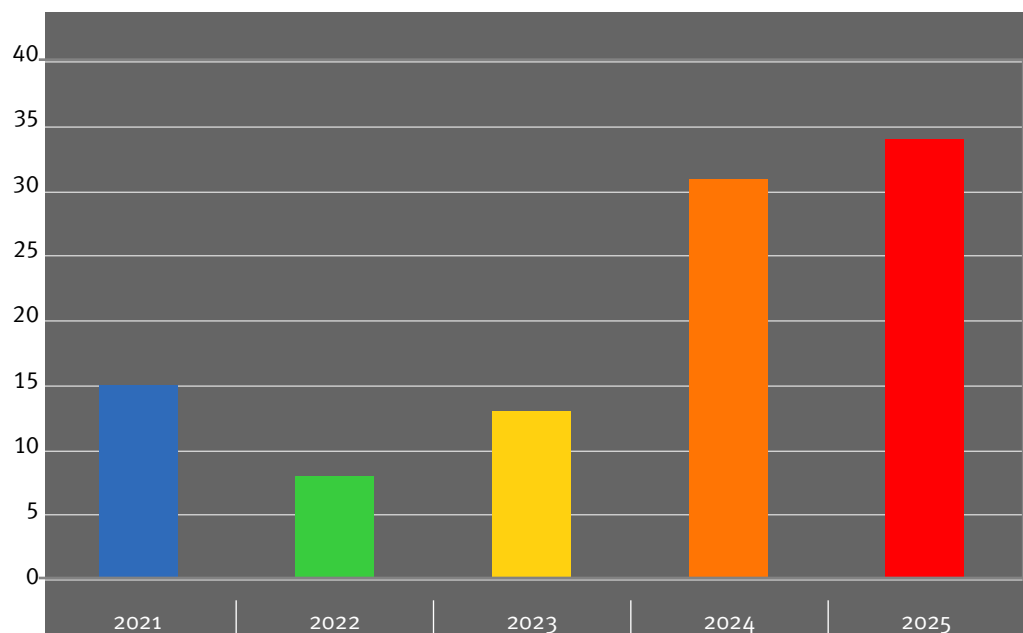
In addition to the homicide cases, the disappearance of 85 minors was reported between September 2024 and February 2025, a figure that had risen to 97 by May. Of the 85 minors reported missing up to February, 58 were adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17, while 25 cases involved children between the ages of 10 and 14. Although the percentage of minors who have been victims of violence in the state

According to Coparmex, the wave of violence has cost Sinaloa around 30 billion pesos, with an estimated loss of approximately 15,000 formal jobs (Nieblas, 2025).

of Sinaloa is comparatively low with respect to the total figure (3% of homicides, 0.07% of disappearances), these statistics represent a serious impact on childhood and adolescence, particularly considering that the majority of reported cases occurred in the context of criminal violence.

In addition, only a few weeks after the most recent outbreak of violence in the state, the Secretariat of Public Education and Culture reported that 582 of 978 basic education schools in Culiacan were closed (Mexicanos Primero Sinaloa, 2025). In other municipalities with high concentrations of students, such as Mazatlan and Ahome, intermittent closures were reported. By January 2025, it was reported that 81 schools were still closed due to the security crisis (Figueroa, 2025). By the end of May 2025, SEPyc indicated that four schools remained closed in areas such as Villa Juarez and conflict-ridden neighborhoods of Culiacan (Mexicanos Primero Sinaloa, 2025). Furthermore, the civil society organization Mexicanos Primero Sinaloa reported that absenteeism in schools that remained open (or later reopened) reached alarming levels, with an average between 73% and 90% of students not attending during the first weeks of the wave of violence. To make matters worse, several journalistic reports indicate that since the outbreak, 374,405

GRAPH 10. HOMICIDES OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN SINALOA
2021 – 2025



Source: In-house elaboration with information from Salas (2025b) and General Coordination of the CESP (n. d.).

One finding of the Fundacion Sociedad Educadora is that trauma caused by violence can be a precursor to other problems such as drug use. Several civil society organizations have reaffirmed that, due to constant exposure to violence, children and adolescents risk normalizing violence and potentially replicating it.

students from basic to higher education have been affected and are at risk of falling behind academically (W Radio, 2025). This figure represents approximately 32% of the state's student population.

Regarding the mental health of children and adolescents affected by the wave of insecurity since September 2024, data from the Psychiatric Hospital of Sinaloa revealed that from the outbreak of violence until April 2025, 448 children and adolescents received care for fear, anxiety and depression linked to the violence. Data from the Health Directorate of the municipality of Guasave, Sinaloa, show that demand for psychological care among children and adolescents increased by up to 60% between September 2024 and 2025 compared with previous years. Moreover, according to a survey conducted by the Fundación Sociedad Educadora in 41 schools in the state, 92% of children between 10 and 12 years old admitted to feeling fear about their surroundings (Sociedad Educadora, 2025).

One finding highlighted by the Foundation is that the trauma caused by violence can be a precursor to other problems such as drug use. Several civil society organizations have reaffirmed that, due to constant exposure to violence, children and adolescents risk



Image: "Sinaloa Governor recognized that they are living in a violence wave: 'We do not have a clear idea when it will finish' at <https://kchcomunicacion.com/2024/10/25/el-gobernador-de-sinaloa-reconocio-que-viven-una-ola-de-violencia-no-tenemos-una-clara-idea-de-cuando-va-a-terminar/>

normalizing violence and potentially replicating it. While the long-term effects of the wave of violence cannot yet be fully measured with data, the consequences mentioned here already have the potential to affect the academic performance of children and adolescents and, therefore, their future development. In other words, the violence in Sinaloa has not only violated the fundamental rights of children and adolescents to education and to develop in a peaceful environment, but it will also significantly reduce the social mobility of this group in the future. According to estimates from INEGI and Coneval, 65% of students with educational setbacks do not complete upper secondary school, which increases their probability of ending up in informal employment by 75%.

This, in turn, affects their likelihood of gaining access to health services or a pension. These scenarios imply that young people affected by violence not only risk exclusion from the formal economy but that intergenerational mobility will be drastically curtailed in the years to come.

In summary, children in Sinaloa have been a major group affected by violence and the statistics reflect this vulnerability. The prolonged suspension of in-person classes and school absenteeism will have negative effects on the continuity of children's education. In addition, the psychological consequences for child and adolescent survivors, combined with learning setbacks, will affect their long-term development. Violence not only represents a security crisis but has become an obstacle to social mobility.

Finally, as in other stages of life, social mobility and prosperity in Mexico are severely undermined by a series of factors that perpetuate inequality, particularly in childhood and adolescence. Poverty and lack of access to essential services such as education and health are fundamental barriers that continue to prevent millions of children and young people from reaching their potential. Despite efforts to reduce poverty, inadequate infrastructure in schools,

educational setbacks and limited health coverage significantly affect future opportunities. Conditions of violence, as exemplified in the case of Sinaloa, further exacerbate these inequalities by interrupting education and causing psychological harm to young people. This context perpetuates a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities, where child labor and adolescent pregnancy amplify social and labor exclusion. Education is essential for the development of human capital and progress in social mobility, but it has faced a profound crisis for years that worsens the prospects for inclusive economic growth. Without structural intervention and the equitable expansion of fundamental rights, the most vulnerable generations will continue to face barriers that hinder their access to a prosperous future and their active participation in a dynamic economy.

Despite efforts to reduce poverty, inadequate infrastructure in schools, educational setbacks and limited health coverage significantly affect future opportunities. Conditions of violence, as exemplified in the case of Sinaloa, further exacerbate these inequalities by interrupting education and causing psychological harm to young people.





**5 BEGINNING OF
PRODUCTIVE LIFE:
15 to 29 years old**

<https://todossomosuno.com.mx/porta1/los-jovenes-en-mexico-estan-atrapados-en-la-pobreza-laboral/>

5 BEGINNING OF PRODUCTIVE LIFE: 15 to 29 years old

«

The circumstances people face in their earlier life stages have lasting consequences on their development. These range from affecting opportunities to complete their education, undertake entrepreneurship, begin or maintain employment, to circumstances that impact life itself, such as increases in cases of suicide, homicide and/or recruitment by organized crime. Understanding the barriers that young people face is crucial and has the advantage of helping to prevent the intergenerational transmission of vulnerabilities. In this section, we analyze the opportunities available to young people between 15 and 29 years of age. We consider a context shaped by pover-

ty, inequality, the condition of public services, mental health, innovation, science and technology, as well as contexts in which crime and insecurity have gained strength.

At this stage, the transition from adolescence to adulthood entails significant reconfigurations with respect to the labor market, future opportunities and the beginning of productive life. It is precisely in this stage that young people seem to have few options: to study and enter the labor market, or to fall prey to organized crime. It is indispensable to strengthen the skills and human capital that the country needs,

Young people seem to have few options: to study and enter the labor market, or to fall prey to organized crime

based on the creation of equal opportunities, so that young people may have more and better options and a dignified life. Unfortunately, in this area we also observe major shortcomings, as our youth find themselves in a context where the country is not offering sufficient opportunities. There is a significant lag in education (both in learning outcomes and school dropout) that limits access to decent employment, while at the same time the precariousness of work prevents the attainment of a fair wage and/or adequate working conditions. Together with the growing wave of insecurity and the strengthening of organized crime, this has made our youth into cannon fodder.

WE ARE MISSING 1 MILLION

In addition to the decline in Mexico's population growth rate, the rapid aging of the population is also taking place, the result of various factors such as the increase in life expectancy (growth in the proportion of older adults) and the reduction in the youth population: adolescents and young adults between 15 and 29 years of age (hereafter, youth).

At present, the youth population stands at 30,427.3 thousand, but in the fourth quarter of 2022 it reached a historic peak of 31,527.5 thousand (INEGI, 2025g). In

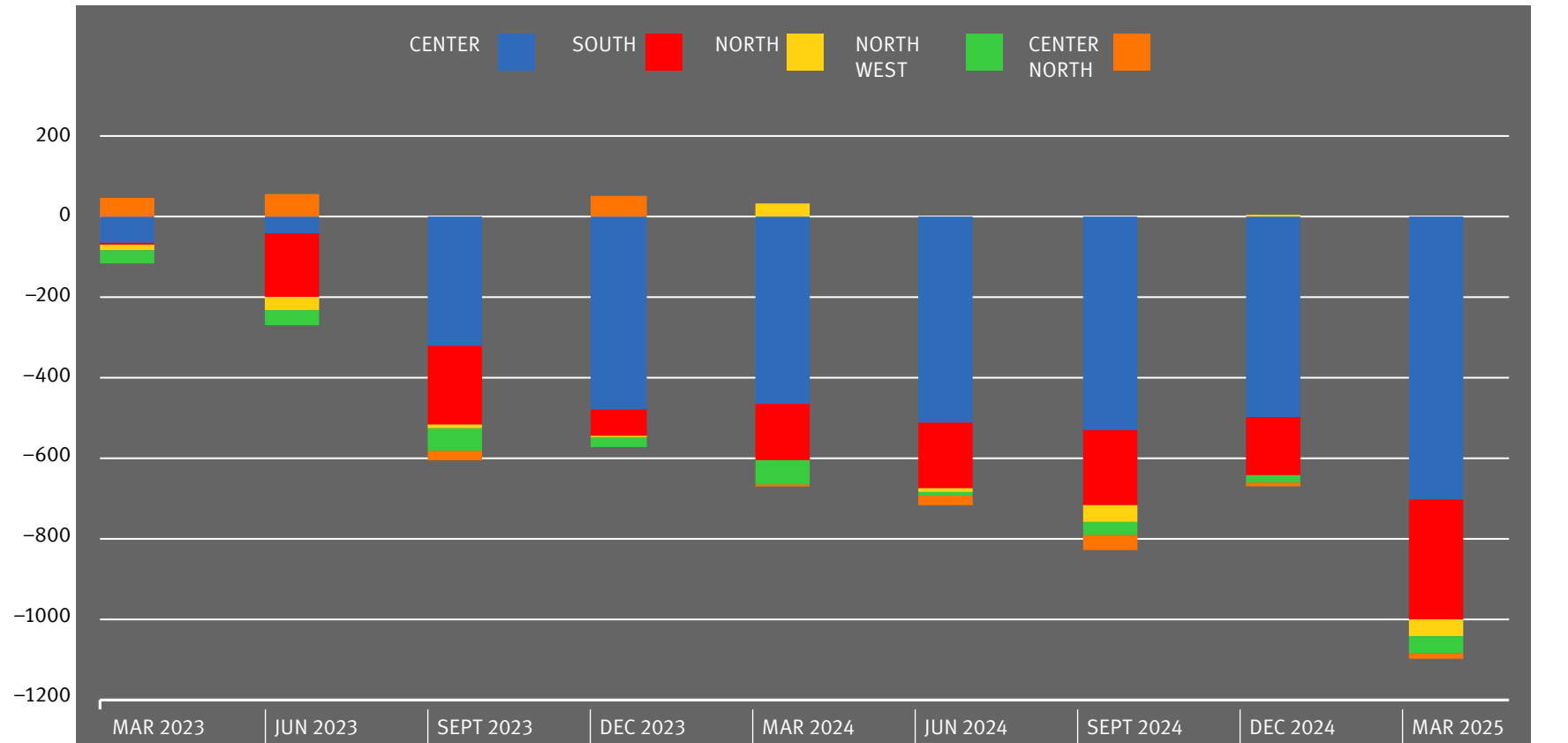
just over two years, covering two federal administrations (Lopez Obrador and Claudia Sheinbaum), Mexico's youth population has declined by 3.5%, equivalent to 1,100.3 thousand individuals (INEGI, 2025g). In the same period, the Mexican population as a whole increased by 2.8%, meaning 2,743.9 thousand more people (INEGI, 2025g). When compared with the last quarter of 2018, the youth population decreased by 383.1 thousand. This latter phenomenon occurred because the youth population continued on a growth path until the onset of the great lockdown (Graph 11).

These types of episodes are recurrent and records exist of another similar moment. In the second quarter of 2012, a peak in the youth population of 29,895.7 thousand was observed, followed by a downward trend that ended eight quarters later (second quarter of 2014) with a minimum of 29,455.4 thousand young people, a -1.5% decline equivalent to 440.3 thousand fewer individuals (INEGI, 2025g). In this sense, the recent decrease in the youth population has persisted for at least one quarter and will be at least twice as severe.

Without exception, all regions of the country experienced considerable declines. Between the fourth quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2025, the

Just over the last two years (2023–2025), Mexico's youth population has declined by 3.5%, equivalent to 1,100.3 thousand individuals (INEGI, 2025g).

GRAPH 11. FALL IN THE YOUNG POPULATION BY REGION
 (FOURTH QUARTER OF 2022 = 100) (THOUSANDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE)



Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2025g).

central and southern regions accounted for 64% and 26.8% of the total loss (−998.9 thousand youth between the two regions), respectively (INEGI, 2025g). This decline represented a variation of −5.8% (central) and −4.3% (southern) in the youth population. The other three regions of the country (north, north-west and north-central) accounted for the remaining 9.2% and showed variations of −0.8%, −1.9% and −0.3%, respectively (INEGI, 2025g).

When examining the youth population by five-year age groups, it is possible to see that the decline is mainly due to a greater contraction in the 20–24 age group, whose variation was −443.8 thousand, equivalent to 40.3% of the total (INEGI, 2025g). The next most affected group was 25–29 years old, with a loss equivalent to 35.9% (−395.1 thousand) of the total (INEGI, 2025g). The variations for these age groups were −4.2% (20–24 years), −4.2% (25–29 years) and −2.3% (15–19 years) compared to the last quarter of 2022 (INEGI, 2025g). The nature of the phenomenon (decline) reflects the seriousness and scope of the problem. Surveys record the decrease in the youth population, which for now seems to be a structural problem, similar to the loss of life due to increases in homicides and disappearances. This reduction of one million young people will have repercussions on the

labor force for at least the next 35 years, as that is the time they would have remained in the labor market (assuming a retirement age of 65).

The variation in the youth population slightly leans toward men, but the difference is not very wide. Between the last quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2025, the variation in the youth population can be explained by a decline of −595.4 thousand men (54.1%) and −504.9 thousand women (45.9%) (INEGI, 2025g). However, when comparing by five-year groups, the

In 2024 the first cause of death of young people 15 to 29 years old was homicide.

This reduction of one million young people will have repercussions on the labor force for at least the next 35 years.



Image: Izaguirre Ranch: The shocking photographs of the "extermination and recruitment center" of organized crime that was found in Mexico at <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/articles/cvger770mpvo>

differences become considerable. The 15–19 age group contributed almost half of the loss of young women (44.5%, or –224.5 thousand women). Of the total population of youth aged 15–19, 85.9% of the reduction corresponded to women and only 14.1% to men (INEGI, 2025g).

In the 20–24 and 25–29 age groups, men accounted for two-thirds of the loss, while women explained one-third of the total. Men made up the majority of the loss among those aged 20–29, with 93.8% of the total (–558.6 thousand men) (INEGI, 2025g). The decline in the male youth population was observed in all regions, unlike women, where the south and central regions showed a clear predominance with variations of –4.5% and –5.7%, accounting for nearly the entire phenomenon (INEGI, 2025g). Women registered a slight gain in their youth population in the northern and north-central regions, with variations of 0.2% (6.6 thousand women) and 1.3% (30 thousand women), respectively (INEGI, 2025g).

Between the second quarter of 2012 and the same quarter of 2014, 71% of the decline in the youth population was explained by the loss of the female population (INEGI, 2025g). That loss occurred in the southern, north-central and central regions of the country.



Image: The risk of young people in Mexico of dying or disappearing escalated in the last years" at <https://interactivos.eluniversal.com.mx/2024/jovenes-desaparecidos/>

In the 20–24 and 25–29 age groups, men accounted for two-thirds of the loss with 93.8% of the total (–558.6 thousand men) (INEGI, 2025g)

At the time, a smaller decline in the male youth population in the northwest (−0.7% or −19.2 thousand men) and growth in the central region (1% or 54.8 thousand men) (INEGI, 2025g) somewhat cushioned the decline in the rest of the regions. Likewise, the loss occurred almost entirely among men and women aged 15–19. The most recent episode (2022–2025) differs from the first in magnitude, regional composition, gender and age. In this sense, it is unlikely that, in the hypothetical case that it was a matter of loss of life, the recent decline in the youth population continues to be linked to the effect of the first contraction (2012–2014). Those who were 15 years old in 2012 would now be around 28 years old.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTH SERVICES (VULNERABLE POPULATION)

In Mexico, a fragmented public health system was built, determined by formal employment. We know that the proportion of people working without social security coverage affects young people more (60% of those aged 15–29) than non-youth (57% of those aged 30–64) (Accion Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza, n. d.).

As a result of social fragmentation and the division of access to health care depending on type of em-

ployment (formal or informal), at least seven health subsystems coexist in our country: IMSS, ISSSTE, state ISSSTE or services for workers in federal entities, Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex), Secretaria de la Defensa Nacional (Sedena) and Secretaria de Marina (Semar). These belong to the social security system for people formally employed in the private sector or at the federal and state public levels, while IMSS-Bienestar provides care for the population without formal employment and without social security, in other words, its objective is to serve those in greater vulnerability.

Having benefits is not always the rule. Currently, INEGI (2025) reports a total of 59,001,009 employed people (first quarter of 2025). Of these, nearly 60% (59.5%) do not have access to health institutions, while only 39.8% report having access to such institutions. Furthermore, the percentage of salaried workers without benefits is higher among the youth population (41%) than among non-youth (27%) (Accion Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza, n. d.).

Although more than 26.9 million people employed in the formal sector have access to public health services such as IMSS, ISSSTE, Pemex, Sedena and Semar, the number of registered facilities to serve

The proportion of people working without social security coverage affects young people more (60% of those aged 15–29) than non-youth (57% of those aged 30–64) (Accion Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza, s.f.).

them at the primary level amounts to only 2,666 units; the number of facilities at the secondary level of care is even lower (545) and for specialized care (tertiary level) the figure reveals much more limited infrastructure (57 units) (DGIS, 2025). To make matters worse, the number of operational units is even smaller than reported by each health subsystem.

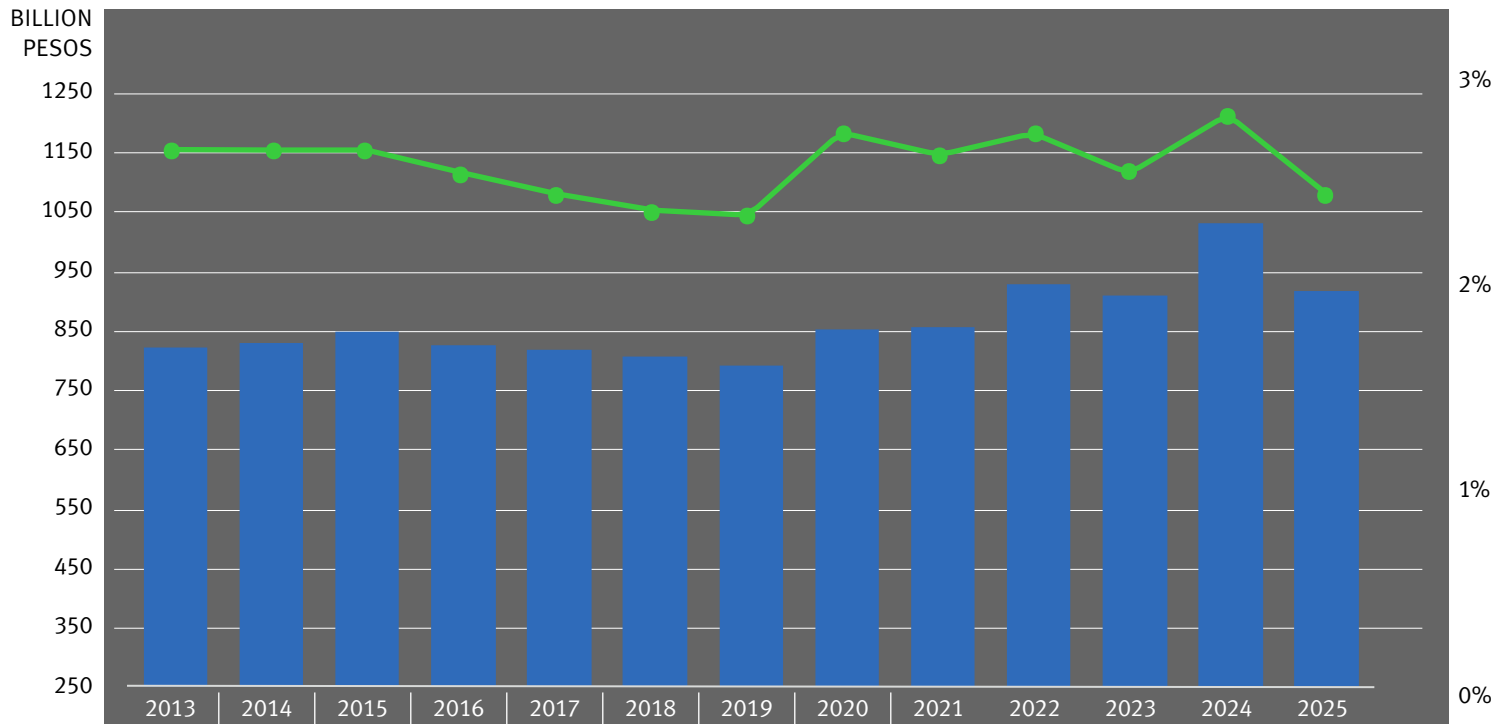
The differentiated allocation of resources among the existing health subsystems is a problem that contributes to perpetuating inequality in access to this right. Unequal access to health services results from a structural problem where Mexicans are treated unequally based on their employment or economic status.

We can also analyze the scope of health services in our country by reviewing the financial resources available. In 2025, the health sector budget is estimated at 918.4 billion pesos, representing a cut of 11% compared to 2024. The 918.4 billion pesos account for 2.5% of GDP. This is 0.4 percentage points lower than what was approved in 2024 (2.9% of GDP) and lower than the level reached in 2013 (2.7%). From this perspective, this represents a setback of at least 10 years in health spending. Moreover, this budget cut moves the country further away from the 6% target recommended by the World Health Organization

INEGI (2025) reports a total of 59,001,009 employed people (first quarter of 2025). Of these, nearly 60% (59.5%) do not have access to health institutions, while only 39.8% report having access to such institutions.

Furthermore, the percentage of salaried workers without benefits is higher among the youth population (41%) than among non-youth (27%) (Accion Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza, s.f.).

GRAPH 12. PUBLIC SPENDING ON HEALTH
(BILLION PESOS MMDP OF 2025) AND (%) OF GDP



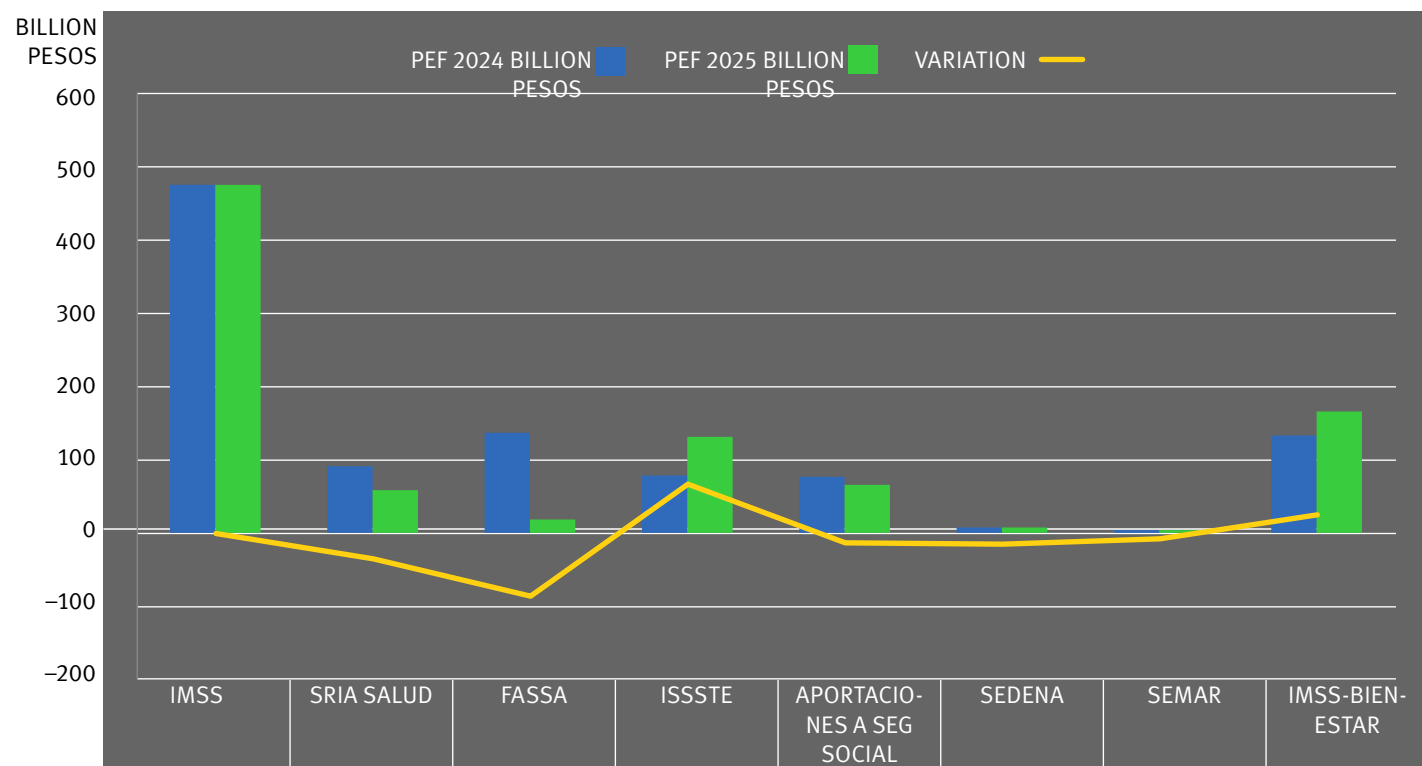
Source: Mendez (2024).

(WHO). In other words, the budgetary gap to advance toward Universal Health Coverage is widening, as an additional 3.5 percentage points of GDP are required (Mendez, 2024) (Graph 12).

When analyzing the evolution of expenditure by institution, it is found that the two main institutions serving the insured population (IMSS and ISSSTE) show

increases in 2025 compared to what was approved for 2024 (0.2% and 132.1%, respectively). In contrast, cuts are evident in the systems that serve people without formal social security: SSA (−35.3%) or the Health Services Contribution Fund (FASSA) (−85.8%). As for IMSS-Bienestar, its budget stands out at 165.2 billion pesos (24.7% higher than in 2024), but this

GRAPH 13. HEALTH SPENDING BY INSTITUTION PEF 2024 AND PEF 2025
IN BILLION PESOS AND VARIATION (%)



Source: In-house elaboration with data from SHCP (2025a; 2025b; 2025c; 2025d; 2025e; 2025f; 2025g y 2025h).

increase does not offset the cuts to SSA and FASSA (Graph 13).

While spending allocated to the population without social security decreases, the target population increases. There are not only fewer resources, but they are distributed among more people. The target pop-

ulation of IMSS-Bienestar is 15.4 million greater than that reported in 2019 under Seguro Popular—51.9 million people in 2019 and 66.4 million in 2025 with IMSS-Bienestar. In this way, we can approach the barriers to access to the health system from the State's perspective. One lies in an underlying problem that results in social fragmentation and another is tied to the

resources available. Full access to the right to health implies both coverage and capacity of the health system, particularly when it comes to differentiated care. This is because at different stages of life, individuals face diverse health challenges. Some of these are described below.

1 HEALTH CARE

Barriers to health access are present throughout the life cycle. However, it is at this stage where they become most evident. It is precisely at the beginning of working life that the barriers to access to social security—and therefore to health care—become visible. By the first quarter of 2025, 60% of the employed population (35.1 million people) were working without social security affiliation. At Signos Vitales (2023), we have documented how effective access to health services influences the opportunities that individuals are able to develop. This is because each person's health status determines their productivity, stability and potential. The importance of progress in health is often reflected in life expectancy. For the age group between 25 and 31 years, life expectancy in 2000 was 78.7 years and by 2012 it had increased to 80.3 years (UNDP, 2016).

As there have been increases in life expectancy, there have also been drastic declines and impacts in the country. COVID–19 pandemic severely affected health conditions in Mexico and around the world; however, Mexico was among the countries most heavily impacted. In this regard, Mexico experienced one of the steepest declines in life expectancy worldwide, with the drop being 2.4 times higher than that recorded globally (Sanchez & Sepulveda, 2024).

It was estimated that, considering the global burden of disease between 2019 and 2021, the reduction in life expectancy for Mexico was 4.6 years. Another severe consequence was an unusually high mortality rate among young adults, with COVID–19 being the second leading cause of death in 2021 for young people aged 25 to 34. In other words, Mexico experienced not only high mortality, but also high premature mortality (Sanchez & Sepulveda, 2024). Currently, the average age of Mexicans is 29 years, meaning this is a young population that coincides with working life. Although there is evidence that it is in this age group where per capita income grows the most (per capita income increased by 75% upon reaching the 18 to 24 age range)³¹, this group also faces barriers to health, which we will address later.

³¹ Data from 2000 to 2006 (UNDP, 2016).

COVID–19 pandemic severely affected health conditions in Mexico and around the world; however, the country was one of the most heavily impacted. nuestro país fue uno de los mas impactados.

Mexico experienced one of the steepest declines in life expectancy worldwide, with the drop being 2.4 times higher than that recorded globally (Sanchez y Sepulveda, 2024).

2 SUICIDE

In Mexico, around 99 young people (ages 18 to 29) die by suicide³² every 24 hours. This is the third leading cause of death among youth in this age group, accounting for 8.4%, after assaults (27.8%) and transport accidents (13.4%) (Redim, 2024). Although on average it is a problem that affects men more severely, when disaggregating the information by age groups, in the 15 to 19 age range the impact is 2.1 times more severe for women than for men (18.8% vs. 8.6%) (INEGI, 2024i). Moreover, since 2010 suicide rates among children and young people aged 10 to 29 have skyrocketed. The 2023 figure indicates that the mortality rate among adolescents aged 10 to 29 is 8.4 (per 100,000 people) at the national level. This rate is 1.2 times higher than that reported for the general population (6.8 per 100,000 people) and nearly twice (1.8 times) the suicide rate for young men aged 10 to 29 (12.41 per 100,000) (INEGI, 2024i) (Graph 14). Evolution of rates of self-inflicted injuries (suicides) by age groups and in general.

The guarantee of the rights to survival, development and protection of each person is subject to the environment in which they develop. Suicide cannot

³² In 2023, a total of 36,416 young people between 18 and 29 years old died due to suicide.



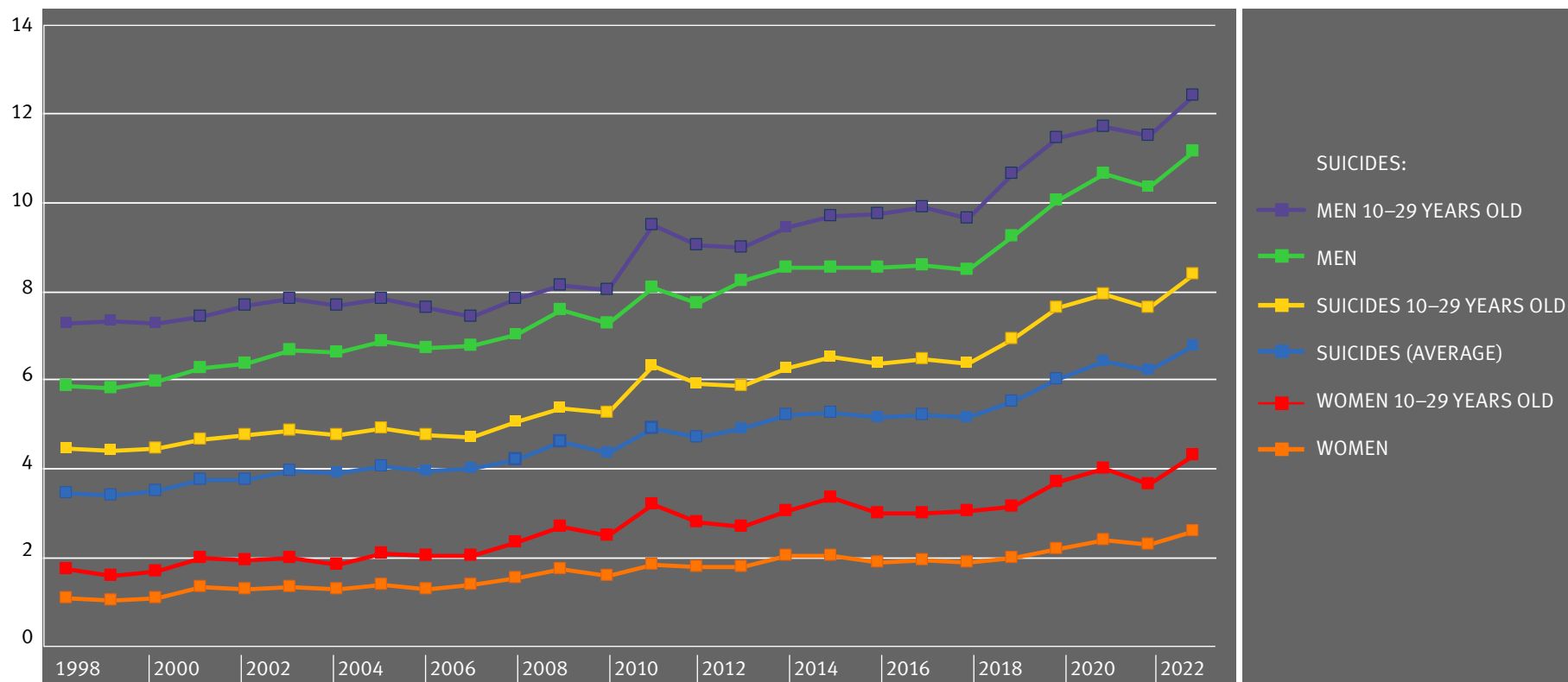
Image: "Adolescents mental health" at <https://www.bupasalud.com.mx/salud/salud-mental-en-adolescentes>

be reduced to a statistical dimension. Behind every self-inflicted death lies a story of profound suffering accumulated over time, leading a person to decide to end their life. It is imperative to monitor and anticipate health problems that can trigger even more complex issues. This is particularly relevant because, in the case of suicide, there are identifiable stages prior to its occurrence, the first of which is the search for solutions to personal problems before suicidal ideation is even present (Baron, 2000).

Adolescence and youth are crucial stages of human development, and in these stages, young people face significant challenges regarding mental health. More-

In Mexico, around 99 young people (ages 18 to 29) die by suicide every 24 hours. This is the third leading cause of death among youth in this age group (Redim, 2024).

GRAPH 14. EVOLUTION OF RATES OF SELF-INFLICTED INJURIES (SUICIDES)
BY AGE GROUPS AND IN GENERAL



Source: In-house elaboration with data from DGIS (s.f).

over, depression is a prevalent disorder with profound impact in this population that can trigger suicidal behavior when not adequately treated, with suicide being one of the most tragic outcomes of depression (Nuñez, 2024). The lack of awareness and prior treatment for young people with depression underscores

the importance of education and early detection of mental disorders, including the gender dimension. Therefore, it is essential to address the early detection of depression and other mental illnesses among youth.

3 ADDICTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH

The use of addictive substances deteriorates the mental and physical health of adolescents who consume them. These include both licit and illicit drugs. The illicit drugs of greatest concern are marijuana, synthetic marijuana, cocaine, crack, hallucinogens, inhalants, heroin and amphetamine-type stimulants. Among licit, medically used drugs are opioids, tranquilizers, sedatives and stimulants. One of the most concerning medical drugs is fentanyl, a highly addictive and lethal opioid (Shamah *et al.* 2024).

Regarding the use of illicit drugs, 67.6% of the adult population is aware of fentanyl use. Of these, 16.5% reported having used some type of drug at least once in their lives, with marijuana being the most widely used (14.9%) (Shamah *et al.* 2024). Between 2017 and 2022, the consumption of amphetamines, meth-amphetamines, ecstasy, or medically used stimulants increased by 218%. In 2022, these substances represented the highest demand for treatment, accounting for 46.2% of cases, followed by alcohol at 24.6% and marijuana or cannabis (which increased by 13.3%) (Secretaria de Salud, 2023).

Currently, based on information from health units across the country, it can be concluded that the sit-

uation has not changed substantially in the past 20 years. Results for 2024 indicate that among the 10 priority mental health conditions treated, anxiety and depression remain the most prevalent (5.5% and 25.9%, respectively)³³ (Secretaria de Salud & Comision Nacional de Salud Mental y Adicciones, 2024).

The distribution by sex indicates that, among the conditions treated, women accounted for the majority of cases of anxiety (73.2%), depression (78%), bipolar disorder (68.1%) and post-traumatic stress disorder (65.2%), whereas men accounted for the majority of cases of attention deficit disorder (77.9%), autism spectrum disorder (78%) and conduct disorder in childhood and adolescence (60.4%) (Secretaria de Salud & Comision Nacional de Salud Mental y Adicciones, 2024). In the 20 to 29 age group, 13,721 cases of anxiety treatment corresponded to women, compared to 4,303 to men. For depression, 6,312 cases involved women, compared to 1,506 involving men (Secretaria de Salud & Comision Nacional de Salud Mental y Adicciones, 2024).

³³ The third and fourth mental health conditions that requested mental health care were conduct disorder 7.6% and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (3.4%) (Secretariat of Health and National Commission for Mental Health and Addictions, 2024).

Anxiety and depression are most frequent in women who accounted for the majority of cases; whereas men are more prevalent in substance use disorders (Secretaria de Salud & Comision Nacional de Salud Mental y Adicciones, 2024).

Young adults (30 to 49 years) is the group that most frequently seek treatment for these conditions, a stage of life marked by high economic, occupational, social and family demands.

In this regard, the most prevalent conditions—namely anxiety and depression—are more common in women, unlike substance use disorders, which are more prevalent among men (Secretaría de Salud & Comisión Nacional de Salud Mental y Adicciones, 2024). Age also provides significant data, as young adults (30 to 49 years) are the group that most frequently seeks treatment for these conditions, a stage of life marked by high economic, occupational, social and family demands.

The care of physical and mental health is decisive for full development. Substance use is a phenomenon commonly associated with health deterioration and is often linked to structural factors such as access to health, education, employment and security, among others. In the worst-case scenario, our children and youth are constantly exposed to both the consumption and distribution of substances that undermine public health. Therefore, Mexico faces a major challenge in addressing issues such as drug trafficking, mental health and addictions that hinder opportunities and constrain the possibilities of a better future.

4 POVERTY: WHAT IS WELFARE MONEY NOT ENOUGH FOR?

Social policy in Mexico since the arrival of the fourth transformation government has focused on increasing direct transfers. This has had regressive effects since those who need it most receive less, which reproduces patterns of inequality. The evidence indicates that Welfare money is not enough to keep young people studying, much less to give them decent employment conditions. At Signos Vitales, we have already documented how, in 2018, people living in poverty (Decile I) received 24% of all social programs, a percentage that declined to 16% in 2020, 15% in 2022 and 14% in 2024 (INEGI, 2025k). Furthermore, we know that, on average, each member of the poorest beneficiary households (Decile I) received 402 pesos per month, while each member of the wealthiest beneficiary households (Decile X) received almost four times more (1,489 pesos) (Jaramillo-Molina, 2025).

Some of the changes in social policy design affecting education have included, on the one hand, the reduction of the budget allocated to programs targeting populations living in poverty (such as Prospera) and on the other, the expansion of non-targeted programs (such as the Benito Juárez Scholarships) (Jara-

Social policy in Mexico since the arrival of the fourth transformation government has focused on increasing direct transfers.

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millio-Molina, 2023). One of the problems with educational scholarships has been their lack of targeting. Results indicate that they are received in greater proportion by those who need them least. Table 12 presents the following findings:

- » Regarding net coverage: The proportion of school-aged youth actually attending school is slightly higher across the different income quintiles. However, the share of high-income youth (quintile V) who actually attended upper secondary education was lower after the “universalization” of scholarships in 2019.
- » Young people between 15 and 17 years old with the lowest income level (quintile I) who studied EMS and who received a scholarship at a public school were practically the same in 2018 (77.7%) as in 2022 (77%). While when analyzing young people with the highest level of income (quintile V), it is found that in 2022 the percentage of those who receive a scholarship in public school is higher than what they received in 2018 (72.2% and 54.1% respectively) (Table 12).
- » An important finding is that, despite the implications of scholarship universalization, there was no significant increase in the percentage of young people who actually attended upper secondary

education in 2022 compared to 2018, when scholarships were allocated based on targeting criteria according to socioeconomic conditions. In this sense, the explicit goal of reinforcing educational access opportunities does not appear to have been achieved (Table 12).

Finally, regarding employment conditions, the Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro (JCF) Program has shortcomings. The program consists of providing money to individuals between 18 and 29 years of age who are neither in school nor employed, who then enter as apprentices in a workplace to receive job training. In the country there are around 31 million young people (ages 15 to 29), of whom 16.7 million are part of the Economically Active Population (EAP). At this stage, young people are characterized by being resilient, creative, and capable of problem-solving, but they face barriers to obtaining decent employment.

It is precisely at this stage that young people face precarious jobs, conditions of exclusion and poverty. Around 15.6 million young people live in poverty, exclusion and precariousness. Of these, 4.9 million are out of school and unemployed; 7.6 million more are in precarious jobs; and 3.1 million are students living in income poverty (Acción Ciudadana Frente a la Pobre-

TABLE 12. NET COVERAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15 TO 17 IN EMS AND SCHOLARSHIPS IN 2018 AND 2022

QUINTILE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME	STUDY EMS 2018 %	STUDY EMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL WITH SCHOLARSHIP 2018 %	STUDY EMS 2022 %	STUDY EMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL WITH SCHOLARSHIP 2022 %
QUINTILE I	51.1%	77.7%	53.6%	77.0%
QUINTILE II	61.9%	64.9%	63.2%	72.4%
QUINTILE III	65.9%	60.1%	66.6%	69.5%
QUINTILE IV	67.3%	56.4%	69.2%	71.3%
QUINTIL VE	76.5%	54.1%	73.2%	72.2%

*Note: Income quintile per person in the household with respect to the total of 15 to 17 years old.

Source: Hernandez (2023).

za, n. d.). Among the barriers to finding employment for these young people are educational lag (incomplete upper secondary education), deficiencies in learning and skills, low self-esteem and motivation to seek employment, accumulated rejection and/or caregiving responsibilities in the home (Accion Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza, n. d.).

Although the Jovenes Construyendo el Futuro (JCF) program is intended to serve these young people, it

presents significant flaws. To begin with, its design does not take into account educational lag, since only 66% of participants have completed upper secondary or higher education, which ultimately turns out to be the main barrier to obtaining decent employment. Moreover, there is evidence that, despite the program's focus on keeping young people "occupied" by generating skills for their potential first job, the results do not support the premise that the JCF program effectively reduces intentional homicides or

Although the Jovenes Construyendo el Futuro (JCF) program is intended to serve young people, it presents significant flaws.

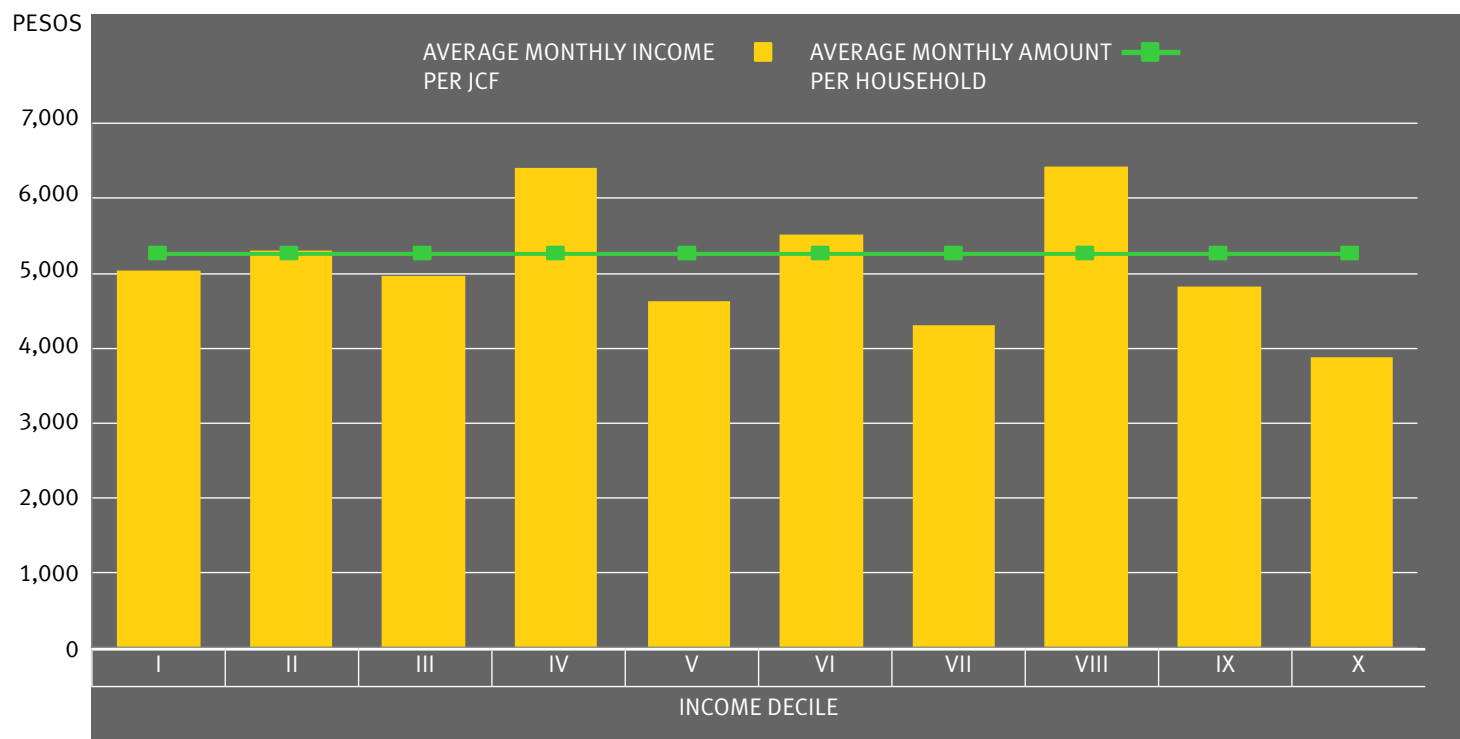
criminality, which was one of its main objectives (Suman & Reyes, 2025).

At the design level, this program is dominated by individuals acting as “work centers” that receive apprentices. This lends itself to a form of simulation commonly used for economic and political purposes. One of the program’s opportunities for improvement lies precisely in the clear and transparent integration of each workplace into a public registry, with precise monitoring of the learning progress of participants receiving support, as well as greater supervision capacity and accountability regarding the training programs implemented, so that they truly provide an improvement in the capacity and subsequent employability of participating youth (Accion Ciudadana Frente a la Pobreza, 2024). In this regard, concerning the distribution of income obtained through JCF in 2024, the monthly average was 5,261 pesos. Graph 15 shows that only deciles IV, VI and VIII reported amounts above the average (INEGI, 2025). Although this program provides a higher amount than that reported in 2022, its coverage is low (0.2% of households receive JCF) and lower than in 2022 (0.3%) (Jaramillo-Molina, 2025) (Graph 15).



Image: "JCF open spaces for apprentices" at <https://programasparaelbienestar.gob.mx/jovenes-construyendo-el-futuro-abre-espacios-para-aprendices-en-mas-de-mil-municipios-del-pais/>

GRAPH 15. AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME OF JCF BY INCOME DECILES



Note: The distribution by decile shows that there is no inclusive effort to support lower-income youth.

Source: In-house elaboration with data from INEGI (2025a).

Although this could represent an effort in inclusive labor policy, in reality, it does not. It reflects the inability to provide quality educational services, the lack of linkage between educational programs and productive and labor markets, the absence of employment and professional development opportunities, and additional factors such as family, economic

and violence-related problems, among others. For this reason, addressing the needs of this population group becomes highly complex and a titanic task. In the following section, we will address this and other problems that shape the reconfiguration of the labor market.

RECONFIGURATION OF THE LABOR MARKET

The decline in the young population has directly impacted the labor market: it affects its composition and the potential labor force (population aged 15 and over in the labor market or intending to join it). Between the fourth quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2025, the young EAP (employed and unemployed youth) decreased by -6.4% (-1,088.6 thousand young people) (INEGI, 2025g). Of these, -919.4 thousand were employed (a variation of -5.7%) and -169.2 thousand unemployed (a variation of -18.2%) (INEGI, 2025g). The relative decline in the young EAP tends to be twice as great as the decline in the young population as a whole.

The loss of young workers affects all economic activities. The reduction in employment is not equally distributed across primary, secondary, and tertiary activities, with 33, 39.7, and 26.9% of the total³⁴, respectively (INEGI, 2025g). For the two years analyzed, the variation has impacted to different extents: -17.1% in the primary sector, -8.2% in the secondary and -2.5% in the tertiary (INEGI, 2025g). This means that the loss by economic activity, in terms of its con-

tribution to the overall labor market, fell mainly on the primary and secondary sectors.

At the regional level, the impact (loss of employed young people) occurred mainly in the center-north, south and northwest, with variations of -8.5, -6.1 and -5.8%. However, the central, center-north and southern regions account for most of the loss of employed youth, with shares of 30.6% (-281.1 thousand), 23.8% (-218.6 thousand) and 22% (-202 thousand), respectively (INEGI, 2025g). The loss of employed young people is most evident in the center-north region: out of every 100 young people who were employed at the end of 2022, currently only 91 to 92 remain employed.

Over the same two years, the EAP (all ages) grew by 0.6% (345.8 thousand people). And from age 30 onward, all age groups maintained positive growth in labor participation. As a result, due to the negative variation in the young population and the growth of the EAP in the rest of the age groups (growth of 3.3% or 1,434.4 thousand people aged 30 and over), the young population has gone from contributing 28.3% to 26.3% of the EAP (INEGI, 2025g). Similarly, it has gone from representing 27.6% to 25.7% of the employed population (INEGI, 2025g). Finally, the labor force participation rate (EAP relative to the total young popu-

The inclusive labor policy reflects the inability to provide quality educational services, the lack of linkage between educational programs and productive and labor markets, the absence of employment and professional development opportunities, and additional factors such as family, economic and violence-related problems.

³⁴ 0.4% of the total loss corresponds to “Not specified”.

lation) decreased from 54% to 52.3% (INEGI, 2025g). In other words, the Mexican labor market is aging at a faster pace than the population as a whole.

The decline in the young population has reduced pressure on the labor market and unemployment. Over the same period, the unemployed population decreased by –305.9 thousand people (–17%) and 55.3% of the reduction in the unemployed population corresponds to the 15–to–29 age group (INEGI, 2025g). To a large extent, the drop in the unemployment rate is due to the decline in the young population, many of whom were unemployed. The unemployment rate for this age group fell from 5.5% to 4.8%, but as has been pointed out, this decline is not related to growth in youth employment.

The loss of jobs and the decline in unemployed young people was considerable. This decrease was not followed by growth in the Economically Inactive Population (EIP). Consequently, strictly speaking, this was not an exit from the EAP. There is no evidence of a transition between the EAP and the EIP, as happens with other age groups. The young EIP also decreased by –0.1% (or –11.7 thousand young people) (INEGI, 2025g). The decline in the young population fell mainly on the working population, not on those outside



Image: "8 of every 10 young people have difficulties to find a job" at <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/cartera/en-mexico-8-de-cada-10-jovenes-tienen-dificultades-para-encontrar-trabajo-falta-de-experiencia-el-principal-factor/>

the labor market. It is important to clarify that within this latter group, only young people aged 15 to 19 saw an increase in the EIP (1.1% or 91.9 thousand young people), particularly in the Not Available Population³⁵ (a variation of 0.8% or 131.6 thousand young people) (INEGI, 2025g). However, such growth was not suffi-

³⁵ The EAP is further divided into Available and Not Available. The latter are not willing to work for various reasons, including non-strictly economic activities such as home care and studies.

cient to offset the loss of young people aged 15 to 19 in the EAP (−353.2 thousand young people) (INEGI, 2025g). The loss of the young population is not explained by a substantial increase in participation in unpaid activities, such as household chores or studies. In other words, the data are alarming: there is no record of this population within or outside the labor market (work or households) in Mexico.

Regarding women's labor participation during pregnancy, it can be affirmed that the combination of a) pregnancy and b) motherhood are events that can entirely alter women's labor trajectories. By the first quarter of 2025, 67.3% (38.8766 million) of women residing in Mexico had at least one child (INEGI, 2025g). Of these women, 54.9% (21.3553 million) were outside the labor market (EIP, Economically Inactive Population) (INEGI, 2025g). In turn, 89.2% (19.0584 million) of women with children in the EIP declared themselves unavailable (INEGI, 2025g). Thus, the proportion of women with children in the EIP who are available to work (would work if they had an opportunity) is 10.8% of the EIP and represents 8.1% of the potential female labor force in Mexico³⁶

³⁶ The potential labor force is defined as the total number of people of working age (15 years or older) who are within the labor market (EAP) and are available to work.

(2.2969 million of 28.3093 million women) (INEGI, 2025g). This is not a minor figure; these are women who have been left out of the labor market. The evidence indicates that there is a close relationship between motherhood and labor exclusion. In motherhood, women devote much of their time to domestic tasks. Of the women excluded from the labor market, 60.9% (18,091,072) have at least one child and are engaged in domestic chores.



Image: "In Mexico, mothers' salaries decrease as the number of children increases" at <https://www.ambasmanos.mx/nacional/en-mexico-salario-de-las-madres-disminuye-conforme-aumenta-el-numero-de-hijos/79583/>

By the first quarter of 2025, nearly two out of three women (64.7%) outside the labor market had at least one child (INEGI, 2025g). The relationship is even higher for those women in the EAP (working or seeking employment): in the same quarter, 70.8% of women in the EAP had at least one child (INEGI, 2025g). In turn, women with at least one child in the EAP (17.5217 million women) represent 61.9% of the potential female labor force (INEGI, 2025g). Thus, women with at least one child represent 70% (19.8183 million) of the potential female labor force in Mexico; however, fewer than half of them can participate in the labor market (45.1% or 17.5214 million women) (INEGI, 2025g).

Unlike women, by the first quarter of 2025, 15.4% of men (1,855,494) outside the labor market were engaged in domestic chores. In the same quarter, there were 22,680,293 people dedicated to domestic work. Consequently, men engaged in household tasks represented 8.2% of total participants. Among men outside the labor market, 62.9% (7,575,072) were studying or retired. On the other hand, official statistics make fatherhood invisible. That is, there are no short-term measurements to determine how many men excluded from the labor market, dedicated to domestic chores, or other non-economic activities, are also fathers of at least one child. Nonetheless, men's participation in

household tasks remains very low compared to women. There are serious disparities between men and women, both inside and outside the labor market.

An important change is the reduction in the number of women aged 15 to 19 (as a proportion of the total of that age group) who have at least one child. The trend has remained downward since a peak of 10.6% (fourth quarter of 2013).

This decline has had two dimensions. On the one hand, by the first quarter of 2025, 4.3536 million women were in the EIP (82.5% of all childless women aged 15 to 19) (INEGI, 2025g). On the other hand, 925.9 thousand women in this condition entered the labor market (17.5% of the total) (INEGI, 2025g). By the fourth quarter of 2013, the ratio of women aged 15 to 19 in the EIP and the EAP was 78.1% (3.8282 million women) and 21.9% (1.0749 million women), respectively. From then to 2024, the variation in the EIP was 525.4 thousand women (INEGI, 2025g). The downward trend in women aged 15 to 19 with at least one child has been accompanied by an exit from the labor market (–149 thousand women aged 15 to 19 leaving the EAP) (INEGI, 2025g). The evidence suggests that delaying the age of pregnancy has reduced labor participation among women aged 15 to 19.

Likewise, childless women aged 15 to 19 have increased their participation in the educational system. Currently, there are 4.0198 million women in this condition attending school, compared to 3.4643 million women attending in the last quarter of 2013. The variation in these years is 555.5 thousand women, representing a 16% increase (INEGI, 2025g). The information suggests that, over the past twelve years, the growth of childless women aged 15 to 19 has been absorbed mostly by the educational system. This also stems from the increase of 583.9 thousand women aged 15 to 19 in the EIP attending school, while women in the same condition in the EAP decreased by –61 thousand (INEGI, 2025g).

5 BROKEN TRAJECTORIES: EDUCATION OR PRECARIOUS WORK

The decline in the young population in Mexico may indicate that these age groups have a broader range of options than simply working, studying, or staying at home, unlike people in puberty or adults (aged 30 and over). After a decade, the population aged 15 to 29 has shown a considerable reduction.

Mexico is facing the greatest loss of social capital in its recent history. This reduction has had a greater

impact on the employed and unemployed population—that is, those who were part of the labor market. There is no evidence of a transition or reduction from the EAP into the EIP. The only possible case is the 15–to–19 age group. However, the increase in the EIP for the 15–to–19 age group does not compensate for the total loss in the other two age groups (20 to 24 and 25 to 29 years), nor within the same group (15 to 19) among those working or seeking employment (EAP). Between the last quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2025, the young population aged 20 to 29 had an accumulated variation in the EIP of –103.6 thousand youth, or –1.6% (INEGI, 2025g). The reduction in the population affected those young people who remained in their homes.

Young people aged 15 to 19 have increased in the EIP due to educational reasons and a slight decrease in the number of young people of this age engaged in household chores. For the same years, the variation (an increase of 91.9 thousand youth aged 15 to 19 in the EIP) is composed as follows:

- » an increase of 101.9 thousand students (1.5%),
- » decreases of –11.5 thousand (–1%) in domestic chores and
- » –2.1 thousand with impediments to work (–4.1%)

Mexico is facing the greatest loss of social capital in its recent history. This reduction has had a greater impact on the employed and unemployed population—that is, those who were part of the labor market.

» and an increase of 3.6 thousand (1.7%) inactive for other non-economic reasons (INEGI, 2025g).

The slight increase in the youth population is not enough to offset the loss in the older age groups (20 to 24 and 25 to 29 years).

Men lead the recovery of the youngest population and join the educational system to a greater extent than women. Likewise, the increase in the number of students aged 15 to 19 in the EIP has been led by men: 84.1% (85.8 thousand) of the increase in students not working are men, compared to only 15.9% (16.2 thousand) women in the same condition. The growth in the population of male and female students (15 to 19 years) in the EIP is 2.8% and 0.5%, respectively (INEGI, 2025g). In the last two years, the enrollment rate for new students in this age group has been much faster (five times) for men than for women. In this sense, in the last two years, the delay in the age of pregnancy has not had a significant (proportional) effect on the increase in educational demand among women.

Most likely, the decline in the young population is affecting the demand for upper secondary and higher education. On the other hand, the increase in the student population is observed only in the 15-to-19 age group. Over the same two years, the population aged

20 to 29 shows a decline of -10.5 thousand students outside the labor market (-0.4%) (INEGI, 2025g). The sharpest negative variation occurred in the 25-to-29 age group (-1.3%), while the decline was -0.3% for students aged 20 to 24 in the EIP (INEGI, 2025g). Although the relative decline is smaller in the 20-to-24 age group, it accounts for 62.8% (-6.6 thousand youth) of the negative variation (INEGI, 2025g).

The loss of the student population is more pronounced among those who were in the labor market. This decline in the student population is not limited to those in the EIP. The young population within the EAP accounts for most of the loss of students (youth studying and working). Between the last quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2025, the loss of young people attending school while in the labor market (EAP) was -266.1 thousand students (-1.6%) (INEGI, 2025g). As we mentioned earlier, the loss of the young student population is not restricted to their participation in the Mexican labor market.

The number of young students and workers has diminished. But, in the same period, the young population that neither studies nor works and has no intention of joining the labor market³⁷ has increased

³⁷ We refer to the young population in the NEAP that is decla-

The decline in the young population is affecting the demand for upper secondary and higher education. The increase in the student population is observed only in the 15-to-19 age group. The population aged 20 to 29 shows a decline of -10.5 thousand students outside the labor market (-0.4%) (INEGI, 2025g). The sharpest negative variation occurred in the 25-to-29 age group (-1.3%),

as a proportion of the total, rising from 13.7% to 14% of the total young population (INEGI, 2025g). This occurs because the reduction in the population, both in absolute and relative terms, of this age group is several times greater than the slight decline in young EIP not attending school (−1.1003 million or −3.5% vs. −51.8 thousand or −1.2%). The decline in the young population is less evident among those displaced from both the labor and educational markets.

All this has occurred while the coverage rate of government programs for the entire young population has declined. In the first quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2023³⁸, only 17.7% of the young population received some government support. By the first quarter of 2025, the coverage rate had decreased to 16.8%, despite the decline in the population. This means that the number of supports decreased at a higher rate (−8.4% or −467.2 thousand youth) than the decline in the population of this age group (−3.3% or −1.0304 million youth) (INEGI, 2025g).

red Not available and that does not attend school.

³⁸ The information related to government support is only published in the first quarter of each year, for this reason the comparison is made against the years immediately before and after (first quarter of 2022 and 2023).

In turn, most of the loss in government support was absorbed by young people in the EIP. Using the first quarter of 2023 as a baseline, the reduction in support for the EIP population was −333.5 thousand or −7.6%, accounting for 71.4% of the decline in government support for youth (INEGI, 2025g). In other words, over the last two years, around eight out of every 100 government supports directed at youth outside the labor market have been cut. Meanwhile, young people in the EAP who received support decreased by −8.4% (−133.6 thousand youth) (INEGI, 2025g).

As a result of the analysis of the population in this age group, it is possible to conclude that the impact goes beyond the labor market and extends to households and the educational system, though to a lesser extent. Thus, demand for higher levels of education decreases and tends downward and in the case of younger groups, the variation in demand (i.e., new demand) is strongly biased toward men. The decline in the older youth population (20 to 29 years) is much greater than the increases in the younger population (15 to 19 years), leaving a gap that may take time to fill. Over the years, the youngest will begin to restore the loss in population. The evidence shows that there is a relationship between the decline in the young population and their labor condition (workers).

6 HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE PRODUCTIVE SECTOR

According to the ENOE, in the first quarter of 2025 the population aged 20 to 24 attending school was 3.2731 million young people (32.5% of the total) (INEGI, 2025g). Of this population, 969 thousand were in the EAP and 2.3041 million young people in the EIP (INEGI, 2025g). The vast majority of young people (59.2% or 5.9718 million) have chosen to enter the labor market without the knowledge and skills necessary to access better employment.

According to the definition of competitiveness by the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness (IMCO), key factors for being competitive include generating, attracting and retaining talent and investment. In this sense, the education level of the population is of utmost importance in fostering such competitiveness. However, the IMCO's *Compara Carreras* study shows that there are disparities between labor supply and demand. On the one hand, service sector (tertiary) activities contribute more than half of GDP, yet these same activities face the greatest difficulty in finding talent.

IMCO, using information from Manpower, reports that 79% of employers in information technologies

state they cannot find sufficient talent in Mexico. However, this problem is not limited to IT; many other tertiary sector activities also face similar challenges: consumer goods and services (72%), transportation, logistics and automotive (69%), finance and real estate (69%), life sciences and health (67%) and communication services (65%). To a lesser extent, the phenomenon also appears in secondary sector activities: manufacturing (66%) and energy (63%) (IMCO, 2024).

In the face of insufficient talent, “employers are re-evaluating how to meet their labor needs”: 72% seek to improve their workforce’s skills and capacities, 32% to fill new permanent roles, 29% to invest in more technology to enhance processes, 26% to offer more contract or temporary roles and 1% have no plans for any of the above (IMCO, 2024). Mexico is losing a significant share of its young talent. According to IMCO, 73% of young people in Mexico do not complete Higher Education. For every 100 children between 5 and 6 years old, 81 enroll in upper secondary education, 37 enter university and 27 finish their degree (IMCO, 2024). The transition between upper secondary education and university is the point of greatest attrition in the education system.

The education level of the population is of utmost importance in fostering such competitiveness. However, the IMCO's Compara Carreras study shows that there are disparities between labor supply and demand. On the one hand, service sector (tertiary) activities contribute more than half of GDP, yet these same activities face the greatest difficulty in finding talent.

The supply of talent has not evolved in line with labor market needs. This is tied to the rigidity of the educational market, which shows that career choices have not changed much over the last decade. Thus, the fields with the most students are those with the most graduates: Law, Business Administration, Industrial Engineering, Accounting and Psychology (IMCO, 2024). The same phenomenon repeats in technical careers, with the largest student concentrations in Electronic Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Computer Science, Accounting and Administrative Services (IMCO, 2024).

Based on IMCO's information, this trend is largely dominated by women. For example, 96% of first-year students in teacher training for basic education (pre-school level) are women. This field has the highest female enrollment relative to total student population. Education-related careers provide incomes 79% higher than those from upper secondary studies (IMCO, 2024).

In contrast, IMCO notes that "men have begun to diversify their career choices toward new trends." However, in the south of the country, particularly in the three states with the highest poverty levels (Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca), rigidity remains greater.

For example, 89% of students in the program of Engineering in Motor Vehicles, Ships and Aircraft are men (IMCO, 2024). STEM-related careers, on average, provide higher salaries than other fields. Engineering, manufacturing and construction careers yield wages 140% higher than those of upper secondary graduates (IMCO, 2024).

The rigidity of the educational market, understood as the propensity of the population to choose the same careers as a decade or more years ago, can limit the opportunities of the most disadvantaged and widen the gaps between regions. While only a fraction of the population can access higher education, the Mexican economy is inefficiently allocating its most valuable assets. This can have repercussions on the country's competitiveness and on wages, which are the most important source of household income. By contrast, economies with higher income levels adapt more quickly to labor market needs. This capacity for adaptation may ultimately exacerbate differences between regions (north and south).

The supply of talent has not evolved in line with labor market needs. This is tied to the rigidity of the educational market; however, "men have begun to diversify their career choices toward new trends" (IMCO, 2024).

The rigidity of the educational market can limit the opportunities of the most disadvantaged and widen the gaps between regions

7 SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

According to ENDUTIH (2024), in 2024, 73.6% (28.7727 million) of households in Mexico had internet access. Over the past two decades, progress has been considerable; however, in the last six years the lowest rate of progress has been observed, with growth of 60.1%. Between 2001 and 2006 growth was 85.5%; in the following periods, 2006–2012 and 2012–2018, advances were 194.1% and 126.6%, respectively. In 2001, only 6.2% (1.4547 million) of households had this service (INEGI, 2025h). Access to this service requires both the necessary tools and access to electricity. The coverage of households with electricity has been reasonably high. In 2007, households with electricity reached 96.1% (25.7871 million). By 2012, service coverage reached 99.2% of households (30.2988 million) (INEGI, 2025h). In subsequent years, coverage fluctuated between 99.2% and 99.5% of total households. In 2024, coverage was 99.4% (38.863 million) (INEGI, 2025h).

In this regard, at least two factors affect the supply of electricity service: changes in demographic patterns and regulatory and competition issues in the electricity market. First, households are growing at a faster

rate than the population. In addition, there has been a lack of investment in transmission and distribution infrastructure, due to federal budget constraints, as well as self-imposed bottlenecks by the federal government in terms of competition in the electricity generation market.

Regarding equipment, between 2001 and 2016 households experienced sustained growth in computer availability. During those years, households with computers increased from 11.8% (2.758 million) to 45.4% (14.9013 million) (INEGI, 2025h). Since then, the number of households with computers has continued to grow (variation of 15.3% or 2.2756 million households compared to 2024), but household growth has been greater. Currently, 43.9% (17.1769 million) of households have a computer (INEGI, 2025h). In 2024, there were 100.2495 million internet users (83.1% of the total). At the same time, there were 98.5743 million mobile phone users (81.7% of the total). The mobile phone is the main tool by which Mexicans access the internet. In 2024, there were 90.8717 million smartphone users, of which 76.0855 million (83.7% of the total) had mobile internet connections (INEGI, 2025h).

There is a close link between cell phone use and internet consumption. Thus, mobile telephony may have facilitated access for much of the population in relatively little time. However, states with the highest poverty levels show a low percentage of cell phone users and, consequently, a low percentage of internet users: Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca and Tabasco show 62.5%, 73.5%, 69.6% and 80.2% cell phone users and similarly, 64.9%, 77.5%, 69.2% and 83.5% internet users, respectively (INEGI, 2025h).

The statistics

confirm that there is a strong correlation between the social sectors at the bottom of the income distribution and those without access to technology. This is especially concerning because technological circumstances from the outset will increasingly affect individuals' outcomes. The educational and labor spheres, two key axes of social mobility, are increasingly linked to access to new technologies. The growing implementation of information technologies in education from the basic levels and the progressive incorporation of cutting-edge technologies across all productive sectors of the economy represent a major risk of lag (exclusion) for social sectors deprived of or with limited access to technology (Braojos, M., n. d.).



Image: ¿What to do if you run out of wifi in rural zones in Chiapas? at <https://oem.com.mx/elheraldodechiapas/local/que-hacer-si-te-quedas-sin-senal-en-zonas-rurales-de-chiapas-22208492>

8 ORGANIZED CRIME AND THE RECRUITMENT OF YOUTH –A REALITY THAT SHATTERS FUTURES

As documented in the previous chapter, violence –and specifically violence linked to organized crime– is impacting social mobility in Mexico. According to investigations by Animal Politico, between 2016 and 2020 (the last three years of Enrique Peña Nieto’s administration and the first three years of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador’s government), more than 480,000 people up to 29 years of age were affected by organized crime, either as victims of murder or disappearance.

It is particularly disappearances and their possible connection to organized crime that have drawn attention. The database of the National Registry of Disappeared or Not Located Persons (RNPDO), as of July 25, 2025, reports a total of 130,984 disappearances throughout the country (RNPDO, n. d.). Looking at the timeline since records of disappearances in Mexico began, it is striking that the 15 to 29 age group has been the most affected. In this regard, the organization Youth Build Mexico reports that between December 1, 2018 and December 31, 2024, a total of 69,331 disappearances of persons aged 15 to 29 were recorded. In addition, disappearances within this age group increased by 26% during

Lopez Obrador’s administration, rising from 10,981 in 2019 to 13,850 in 2024. Just last year, an average of 38 young people were victims of disappearance every day (Youth Build Mexico, 2025). The same organization also highlights that among those aged 15 to 19, young women represent the most affected group, while the most vulnerable men fall within the 21 to 24 age bracket (Youth Build Mexico, 2025). As of 2025, investigations by Animal Politico report that by May, more than 1,000 individuals aged only 15 to 19 had been reported missing in Mexico, representing a 75% increase compared to the same period in 2024 (Ureste, 2025) (Graph 16).

At the state level, Jalisco and the State of Mexico stand out, among others. According to data from the University of Guadalajara, in just the first four months of 2025, 616 disappearances were recorded in the state of Jalisco. What is particularly concerning here is that the monthly average of disappearances in the 15 to 19 age group rose from 9.8 to 25.3 between 2023 and 2025, indicating a worrying surge that even surpassed other age ranges. The State of Mexico has stood out since the beginning of records as the state with the highest number of disappearances (62,995 between 1953 and 2025).

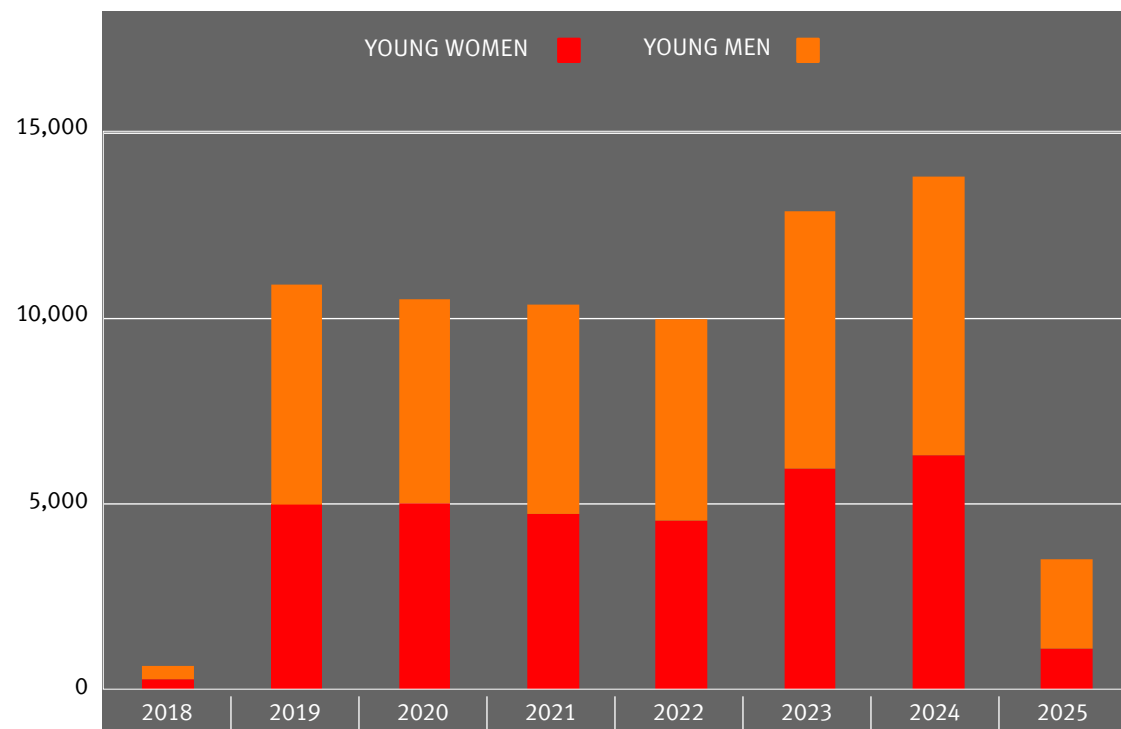
Between December 1, 2018 and December 31, 2024, a total of 69,331 disappearances of persons aged 15 to 29 were recorded (Youth Build Mexico).

The state of Sinaloa represents an exceptional case worth adding. By the end of October 2024, less than two months after the outbreak of violence, 105 young people had already been reported missing; of these, 52 individuals were between 18 and 29 years of age (Ureste, 2024). This figure, which arose from the war between organized crime groups, represents a 154% increase compared to the same period in 2023 and at the same time shows the possible connection between disappearances and the recruitment of this age group by organized crime.

As an important data point, in Mexico the population group between 15 and 29 years of age represents approximately 30.8 million people. However, 15.6 million of these young people face conditions of vulnerability as they neither study nor work, or they do so under precarious conditions. As various investigations and civil society organizations have reported, this situation has been exploited by organized crime in such a way that youth recruitment has been on the rise, as cartels view them as easy targets, turning victims into perpetrators.

The discoveries of sites such as Rancho Izaguirre and other training and extermination centers across the country, together with the data presented here,

GRAPH 16. NUMBER OF MISSING PEOPLE BETWEEN 15 AND 29 YEARS OF AGE
2018–2025



Source: In-house elaboration with information from Youth build Mexico (2025), RNPDO (n. d.) and Ureste (2025). **The 2018 figures only include the month of December, the first month of Lopez Obrador's term.

Less than two months after the outbreak of violence, 105 young people had already been reported missing; of these, 52 individuals were between 18 and 29 years of age (Ureste, 2024)

indicate that the increase in disappearances within this age group is increasingly related to recruitment by organized crime. While there are no official figures on the exact number of recruitments, experts have warned of a systematic strategy by the cartels to recruit individuals for criminal purposes. In this regard, a structural problem that has sparked reactions from international organizations is the fact that forced recruitment is not classified in the Mexican penal code. Since 2011, the UN has repeatedly recommended (2011, 2015 and 2024)³⁹ that the crime be recognized and classified; however, as of the closing of this report, there are no signs that the government is working on the issue (Mares, 2025). On the contrary, several civil society organizations have denounced that the government has focused on legislative proposals that lower the age of criminal responsibility, increase sanctions and therefore undermine the human rights of those affected. The lack of legal classification of the issue, combined with

³⁹ The UN recommendations focus on three points: the recognition and classification in the criminal code of the crime of forced recruitment; the creation of comprehensive separation, rescue, social integration and psychological treatment programs for those affected; and the construction of a culture of peace from spaces such as schools. A substantial change is also demanded in the security strategy, which is currently based on militarization, punitive populism and the criminalization of poverty.



Images: "Mexican authorities denied that Ranch Izaguirre, an hour from Guadalajara, was an extermination site" Photo: AFP/Getty Images at <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/articles/c7oxry2yjxdo>; "They condemn government complicity" at <https://www.jornada.com.mx/noticia/2025/03/15/estados/jalisco-repudian-complicidad-de-gobierno-con-narco-por-hallazgos-en-teuchitlan>

alarming levels of impunity in the country, not only jeopardizes potential judicial processes but also has severe consequences for the social mobility of victims, as the lives of those affected are cut short at the initial stage of their productive lives.

In addition to the increase in direct victims, Animal Politico has documented that the participation of young people in high-impact criminal acts potentially linked to organized crime increased during Lopez Obrador's administration, despite multimillion-dollar investments in social programs and scholarships. According to investigations, between 2018 and 2022 a total of 41,981 young people between 19 and 25 years of age were arrested for crimes such as homicide, drug-related offenses and intentional injuries. This represents a 65% increase compared to the administration of Enrique Peña Nieto (Animal Politico, 2023). During 2023 alone, 32,852 young people were reported as having committed illicit acts such as injuries, robbery, threats and small-scale drug trafficking, among the most frequent (Gallo, 2025). Although not all of these arrests can be directly linked to organized crime, they may serve as indicators of the widespread violence that has had a significant impact on youth.

On the other hand, analyzing the incarcerated population may provide further indications of how the 15 to 29 age group is increasingly linked to organized crime and therefore sees its life opportunities diminished. According to INEGI data, by the end of 2023, 233,173 individuals were deprived of liberty in federal and state penitentiary centers. Of this total, 94.3% were men and 5.7% women. Compared to 2022, these figures represent a 3.2% increase in the total prison population (INEGI, 2024d). Regarding ages, 60.2% of the incarcerated population were between 18 and 29 years old, a figure similar to that of the previous year (60.3%).

As for crimes committed, by the end of 2023 there were 2,112 organized crime offenses committed by men and 145 by women. These figures represent 16% and 14% respectively of all crimes in federal penitentiary centers. To this can be added crimes such as kidnapping (6,080), homicide (5,472), weapons-related crimes (3,322), or drug offenses linked to small-scale trafficking (1,331), which, although not explicitly defined as organized crime, can certainly be connected to it. According to the most recent information from the Cuaderno Mensual de Informacion Estadistica Penitenciaria Nacional, in February 2025, the number of individuals between 18 and 29 years of age de-

Animal Politico has documented that the participation of young people in high-impact criminal acts potentially linked to organized crime increased during Lopez Obrador's administration.

Between 2018 and 2022 a total of 41,981 young people between 19 and 25 years of age were arrested for crimes such as homicide, drug-related offenses and intentional injuries. This represents a 65% increase compared to the administration of Peña Nieto (Animal Politico, 2023).

prived of liberty in penitentiary centers was 62,507, representing 26% of the total prison population and remaining the largest group (Government of Mexico, 2025).

Although this figure appears to have dropped considerably compared to INEGI data, it is clear that this age group reflects a population particularly susceptible to violence and, in turn, to organized crime. Considering that the 15 to 29 age group constitutes approximately one quarter of Mexico's population and that these ages represent a key segment of the labor force, the consequences of violence—and especially of a state that fails to protect these young people—are alarming, both for the development of individuals and for the country as a whole. Without a doubt, the incorporation of young people into organized crime not only interrupts education but also, in the long term, undermines the professional development of those affected. Consequently, this has a dampening effect on the GDP and the country's future productivity. Since the work carried out by recruited individuals is limited to illicit activities, it not only fails to generate economic value but also perpetuates cycles of poverty.

9 MIGRATION: THE SOLUTION?

Migration is not a new phenomenon for Mexico. INEGI data estimate that 1.2 million people emigrated from Mexico between 2018 and 2023, most of them in search of job opportunities. With nearly 88% of these Mexican migrants heading to the United States (INEGI, 2024f), that country remains the most popular destination for Mexican migrants. Reports by Signos Vitales have analyzed in depth the socio-economic effects of this migration for Mexico, clearly showing a correlation between outward migration and social mobility (Signos Vitales, 2025).

That said, the violence generated by organized crime in Mexico appears to have added to the causes of migration, affecting different regions and their inhabitants. As has been seen throughout this report, one of the groups most vulnerable to this violence crisis are young people between 15 and 29 years old. With the aim of contributing to a broader analysis, the following data and trends indicate that many young people in this age group are also opting for interstate migration. Internal or interstate migration is a demographic phenomenon of great relevance in Mexico, affecting both population distribution and the economic and social development of the country.

According to INEGI's most recent Population and Housing Census in 2020, internal migration in Mexico mobilized more than 15 million people. The most cited causes were family-related reasons (45.8%), employment (28.8%), education (6.7%) and insecurity (4%) (INEGI, 2021). For 2021, the National Survey on Victimization and Perceptions of Public Safety (Envipe) by INEGI estimated that 831,490 people changed homes or places of residence to protect themselves from crime (INEGI, 2023b). The 2023 National Demographic Dynamics Survey (ENADID) confirmed that interstate migration has remained stable, with 3% of the population changing states since 2018 (INEGI, 2024f). According to ENADID, more than 320,700 households changed homes or places of residence within the country to protect themselves from crime, representing an increase of more than 40% compared to the annual average of previous years (INEGI, 2024f).

The National Population Council (Conapo) and the Documentation Network of Migrant Defender Organizations (Redodem) confirm that a growing number of internally mobile people in Mexico are being displaced due to violence, including direct threats and forced recruitment. That said, there is a clear underreporting of internal migration due to insecurity

in Mexico, which makes in-depth analysis difficult. Mexico officially recognized forced internal displacement as an element of migration caused by insecurity in 2019 (Segob, n. d.). Nevertheless, exact or updated figures have not been obtained, as no national registry exists.

In an attempt to bridge the gap in official data and approximate the real situation, several experts estimate that internal migration from violent municipalities could be between 10.4% and 21.8% lower if high homicide levels did not exist (Rodriguez Chavez, 2021). In an experimental statistic, INEGI carried out a survey in the state of Chihuahua in 2021 with the aim of highlighting how violence affects decisions to migrate internally. The survey revealed that 66% of displaced migrants reported having been victims of crime. On the other hand, the average age of migrants was 23.2, with the age group of 18 to 29 years being the most affected (INEGI, 2022). It is worth noting that this group also faced greater difficulties in meeting economic needs prior to their displacement and 60% had only a basic level of education (INEGI, 2022). This indicates, additionally, that people with less education and economic solvency are more likely to be affected by violence and to opt for migration. Other organizations, such as the Internal

Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Human Rights Program at Universidad Iberoamericana, estimate between 26,000 and 28,000 internally displaced persons in 2024 due to violence, representing an increase of more than 120% compared to 2023 (UNHCR, n. d.). In line with this, the Global Report on Internal Displacement 2025 ranked Mexico third in the Americas in terms of internal migration caused by violence and conflict, with a total of 390,000 displaced persons between 2015 and 2024 (IDMC, 2025).

On the other hand, correlating data on the states with the highest emigration and the most violent states can offer a better picture of the connection between violence and migration. Available data for 2024 indicate that the states with the highest internal displacement were Chiapas, Sinaloa, Michoacan, Chihuahua and Guerrero. Meanwhile, research by Lantia Intelligence, based on SESNSP data, placed Colima, Morelos, Baja California, Chihuahua and Guanajuato as the five states with the highest homicide rates per 100,000 inhabitants (98.4 / 64.8 / 51.3 / 42.0 / 39.4). However, focusing specifically on Sinaloa, between September and December 2024 alone, 4,400 people were displaced. Considering the homicide rate during this period (25.4 per 100,000

inhabitants), this suggests a ratio of approximately 14 displacements per homicide.

If one only considers the total number of homicides per state, regardless of population, Chihuahua—as one of the states with the highest emigration—was among the top five, with 1,852 homicides up to November 2024. Comparing the increase in homicides relative to 2023, Chiapas and Sinaloa stood out as states with the highest increases, at 58% and 43% respectively (Angel, 2024). On the other hand, available data on internal migration between 2015 and 2020 indicate that Guanajuato stood out with negative migration, meaning more people left the state than entered, with a deficit of nearly 90,000 people during this period (Carranza, 2021). This same state has also shown the highest homicide rates in recent years.

Considering that homicides represent only one aspect of violence and that the assessment of the degree of violence by state varies depending on the methodology used, the data presented do not necessarily indicate a direct relationship between violence and migration in all states. Nevertheless, certain correlations can be observed. In this regard, the perception of insecurity plays an important role. According to data from Integralia, the five municipalities with

the highest perception of insecurity in 2024 were located precisely in three of the states with the greatest internal migration: Michoacan, Sinaloa and Chiapas (Integralia, 2024; INEGI, 2024g).

Regarding the 15–29 age group specifically, Guerrero, Michoacan and Tamaulipas stand out as major expellers to other states in the country or, in some cases, to the United States. It is worth noting here that the most cited reason for migration among young people is the search for job opportunities and better economic conditions. As for destination states, according to Conapo data, by 2020 Nuevo Leon and Queretaro ranked first and second in internal immigration, with the reception of 185,936 and 135,000 migrants, respectively, between 2015 and 2020 (INEGI, 2021; Piedra, 2021). Once again, it is clear that the economic variable must be considered, as these destinations have large industrialized cities with more job opportunities than rural areas or states with less economic activity.

Research, available data and estimates clearly show that the relationship between violence and migration is not causal or linear per se. Additionally, the lack of updated data prevents an exact correlation between internal migration and homicide rates in a specific



Image: "Interstate migration in Mexico" at <https://tribunadequeretaro.com/invitados/espor-la-gente-que-viene-de-fuera/>

period. Similarly, for a broader picture, other violent crimes such as kidnapping, extortion and robbery would need to be included in the analysis.

Nevertheless, it can be confirmed that violence does have a relationship with interstate migration in Mexico. Some of the data presented here, as well as previous reports, have made it clear that the causes of internal migration in Mexico are manifold. With respect to the 15 to 29 age group, while the search for job opportunities in industrial cities continues to represent one of the main reasons for internal migration, violence and organized crime as displacement factors are not far behind. The impacts of these movements on social mobility are evident: human capital is reduced in high-emigration areas and family structures are destabilized. Additionally, leaving one's place of origin is not only becoming a survival strategy but also cuts off opportunities during one of the most crucial stages of productivity. Without a doubt, it can be confirmed that migration itself increasingly constitutes an important engine/facilitator of social mobility in Mexico.

In conclusion, the 15 to 29 age group in Mexico faces a series of interconnected challenges that limit social mobility and prosperity in the country. Demo-

The impacts of internal migration, violence and organized crime are evident: human capital is reduced in high-emigration areas and family structures are destabilized. Additionally, leaving one's place of origin is not only becoming a survival strategy but also cuts off opportunities during one of the most crucial stages of productivity.

graphically, the youth population has experienced an alarming decline, with a drop of 1.1 million young people between 2022 and 2025, reflecting a negative trend that has affected young people between 20 and 24 years old the most. This population loss has directly impacted the labor market, reducing the potential labor force in primary and secondary activities. Moreover, young people are trapped in a fragmented health system with limited social benefits, where nearly 60% of them lack access to adequate health services, creating significant barriers to their personal and professional development. In terms of education, the transition to higher education has become increasingly inaccessible, with a high percentage of young people dropping out of school, perpetuating poverty and limiting job opportunities.

This phenomenon is further exacerbated by rising suicide rates and substance abuse, which reflect a deterioration in young people's mental health, aggravated by the lack of services and limited access to appropriate treatments. In parallel, organized crime has had a devastating impact, with thousands of young people falling victim to disappearances or recruitment, drastically interrupting their life trajectories and fueling a cycle of violence and poverty. Migration, both internal and abroad, has been viewed as an escape from insecurity and lack of opportunities, but it has also been a factor that impoverishes regions of origin by reducing human capital in already impoverished areas. Thus, the outlook for young Mexicans of productive age is complex and vulnerable, as they face a set of structural barriers in health, education, employment and security that limit their ability to generate a positive impact on their own lives and on the country's development. The lack of effective public policies to address these problems perpetuates inequality, blocking access to effective social mobility and hindering the construction of a prosperous future for this key age group.

The youth population has experienced an alarming decline of 1.1 million young people between 2022 and 2025, affecting mostly people between 20 and 24 years old. This population loss has directly impacted the labor market, reducing the potential labor force.

The 15 to 29 age group in Mexico faces a series of interconnected challenges that limit social mobility and prosperity in the country..



A female worker in a red shirt and white cap is working on a car door. She is wearing white gloves and is focused on her task. The background shows a blurred industrial setting with other workers and equipment.

**6 ADULTHOOD
PRODUCTIVE LIFE**
30 to 59 years

<https://adnoticias.mx/dia-del-trabajo-ineg/amp/>

6 ADULTHOOD PRODUCTIVE LIFE

30 to 59 years

«

In this stage of life, some of the outcomes of health care, social policies focused on poverty and health, as well as previous opportunities (social mobility), generally begin to manifest. At the same time, we see how the inequalities faced over time evolve and affect life-course trajectories in various ways.

The impacts for this stage of life remain present in terms of health, education, poverty and income. We describe what and how the outcomes of inequalities in earlier stages permanently affect the course of life. This dimension also includes gender analysis, since historically women bear higher costs in terms of income and social mobility due to roles associated with

caregiving, work and family, among others. We also describe regional differences across the country, as they play a significant role.

1 OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY: EDUCATION AND ECONOMY

At present, we have made significant progress in measurements and data that allow us to identify contrasting outcomes regarding the opportunities to which people could aspire and their current results. In this regard, we know that poverty is inherited in Mexico, as people's background significantly influ-

ences their access to opportunities (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025). In our country, low social mobility is largely explained by high inequality of opportunity.

But what is social mobility? In theoretical terms, social mobility is composed of two types: (1) structural intergenerational mobility and (2) positional intergenerational mobility. The first is linked to processes of economic growth, as these imply an expansion of resources available throughout the entire income distribution or in specific segments. The second is related to the notion of equality of opportunity in relation to a person's current position compared to their position of origin (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

The main findings indicate that in Mexico, half of the people born into the lowest economic quintile⁴⁰ (quintile I) remain there for the rest of their lives. Twenty-eight percent of these individuals do not rise above the second economic quintile. This means that nearly three out of four people born in the lowest economic quintile did not experience upward social mobility (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

⁴⁰ It is the aggregate in 5 quintiles, each representing groups of 20% of the population based on their level of economic resources.

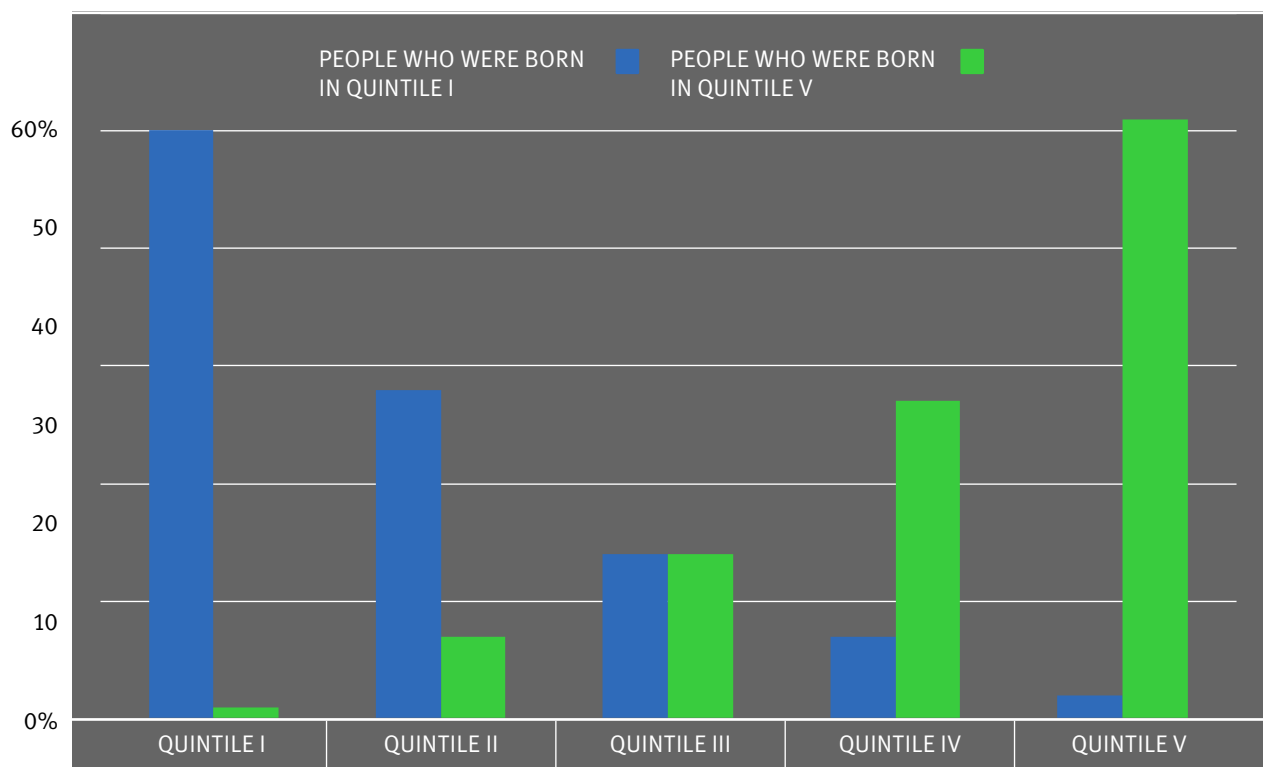
The following graph shows that 50 out of every 100 people born in households with the fewest economic resources (quintile I) remain in that position throughout their lives, while only 1 out of every 100 people born in the wealthiest households (quintile V) end up in quintile I, that is, in the bottom 20% of the population in terms of resources. Moreover, we can see that only 2 out of every 100 people born in quintile I were able to move up to the highest group (quintile V). Meanwhile, 51 out of every 100 people born in quintile V households remained there for the rest of their lives (Graph 17).

We also know that these results become much more complex when the regions of the country are analyzed. The southern region⁴¹ shows a high persistence of individuals who were born in households with fewer economic resources and remained at that same level in adulthood; this percentage is 64%, while the central-northern region recorded the lowest per-

Half of the people born into the lowest economic quintile (quintile I) remain there for the rest of their lives. Only 2 out of every 100 people born in quintile I were able to move up to the highest group (quintile V).

⁴¹ The northern region includes Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas; The north-west includes southern Baja California, Sinaloa, Nayarit, Durango and Zacatecas; the north-central region considers Jalisco, Aguascalientes, Colima, Michoacan and San Luis Potosi; The center is made up of Guanajuato, Queretaro, Hidalgo, State of Mexico, Mexico City, Morelos, Tlaxcala and Puebla; and the south includes Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatan and Quintana Roo.

GRAPH 17. DESTINATION OF THE POPULATION ORIGINATING FROM HOUSEHOLDS WITH THE LEAST ECONOMIC RESOURCES (QUINTILE I) VERSUS THE POPULATION ORIGINATING FROM THE HOUSEHOLDS WITH THE MOST RESOURCES (QUINTILE V)
(QUINTILE V) (PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE)



Source: Monroy-Gomez y Velez-Grajales (2025).

50 out of every 100 people born in households with the fewest economic resources (quintile I) remain in that position throughout their lives, while only 1 out of every 100 people born in the wealthiest households (quintile V) end up in quintile I

sistence (31%). This means that in the states comprising southern Mexico, it is 2.1 times less likely for individuals to move out of quintile I compared to the central-northern states. In summary, in Mexico half of the people born into the lowest income quintile re-

main there for life (50%); in the north this proportion is lower at 37%, while in the south this percentage reaches two out of every three people (64%)⁴² who

⁴² The percentages for the other regions are: 38% for the north-west region, 31% for the north-central region and 41% for

are born in quintile I households and fail to surpass it in adulthood.

In terms of gender, evidence shows that women have fewer opportunities for social mobility. The percentage of people who are born into and remain in quintile I in adulthood is higher for women (51%) than for men (49%). At the same time, wealth persists more among men (53%) compared to women (47%). This means that, on the one hand, women are more likely to be born into and remain in poverty than men and that their probability of overcoming this condition of origin (quintile I) and rising to the highest (quintile V) is three times lower than that of men⁴³ (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

The data also reflect that in Mexico, education is likewise inherited: the level of schooling we can attain is determined by our parents' educational attainment. Nationally, the average level of schooling is at the end of lower secondary education (9.7 years completed); it is precisely at the beginning of upper secondary education that educational trajectories are truncated. However, this is the result of inequality of opportunity, which influences the level of education

the central region. (Monroy-Gomez, Velez-Grajales, 2025).

⁴³ Long-range mobility for men 3% and for women 1% (Monroy-Gomez, Velez-Grajales, 2025).

a person can achieve. What happens with someone between 20 and 64 years of age who comes from a household with lower levels of education? Evidence reveals that 4 out of 10 people born in households where parents attained at most primary education do not surpass their parents' level. Thirty-six percent reach the end of lower secondary school, which is precisely the national average. In other words, nearly three out of four people do not exceed the national average of schooling (completed lower secondary).

This is starkly contrasted by the fact that only 9 out of every 100 individuals born in households where parents attained at most primary education reach higher education, whereas 63 out of every 100 with parents who had professional degrees achieve that same level. This is particularly alarming, as the probability of reaching the educational level that the labor market truly rewards (professional studies) is seven times lower for those from households with the lowest educational attainment (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

Evidence over time confirms the reality experienced by Mexicans. There is strong persistence of poverty, meaning that despite reductions in poverty, it remains high. In 2017, the poverty rate was 48%; by 2023,

Women have fewer opportunities for social mobility. The percentage of people who are born into and remain in quintile I in adulthood is higher for women (51%) than for men (49%).

this percentage had fallen by 7 points to 41%. This outcome is consistent with the percentage of people who escaped income poverty: 79% in 2017 and 73% in 2023 (a reduction of 6 percentage points). This means that 73 out of every 100 people who were in quintile I at birth are still below the welfare line (in terms of income) in adulthood. That is, 3 out of 4 people born into this disadvantaged condition (quintile I) in terms of economic resources remain there for the rest of their lives. While the reduction in income poverty might appear as good news, the negative aspect is that persistence in poverty remains high, as it is linked to one's condition of origin (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

An explanation of an unequal Mexico is tied to patterns of social mobility. Life outcomes in terms of education and income depend both on factors within a person's control (such as effort) and on factors beyond their control (circumstances). In this sense, at least 48% of differences in life outcomes (education, wealth, income and economic resources) are due to unequal opportunities. Furthermore, Mexico ranks among the 10 countries with the highest inequality of opportunity. The determining factors are: household economic resources (54%), parents' educational attainment (11%), region of origin (8%), gender

(7%), whether one belongs to a rural community or has an agricultural worker father (6%), whether one is Indigenous (2%), whether one's mother was an agricultural worker (2%) and whether there was an absence of public services in the neighborhood (1%) (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

To the condition of household origin must be added other circumstances. In Mexico, personal characteristics also influence achievement opportunities in differentiated ways. In this regard, unequal treat-



Image: "Skin color, first discrimination factor in the labor market" at <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/sociedad/color-de-piel-primer-factor-de-discriminacion-en-mercado-laboral/>

ment is highly significant. In particular, findings from CEEY surveys point to greater disadvantages in opportunities for women, Indigenous populations and people with darker skin tones. In other words, if a person is born into the group with the fewest economic and educational resources, the limitations to building a better future are exacerbated as the other factors mentioned above are added—none of which affect or determine their potential. In summary, the achievement of two people with the same potential and making the same effort in Mexico will result in different and more distant outcomes, to the detriment of the one who, in addition to being born into a household at the bottom of the economic ladder and whose parents had lower levels of schooling, was born and raised in a rural area of the southern region, is a woman, belongs to an Indigenous group and has a darker skin tone (Monroy-Gomez & Velez-Grajales, 2025).

To better understand the reality of the country, it is necessary to analyze barriers and outcomes at each stage of life. As noted in this particular section, we described the outcomes of social mobility attained in adulthood relative to conditions of origin, where poverty has a high hereditary component and Mexicans born poor face enormous challenges to improve their condition. The pursuit of true equality of opportunity

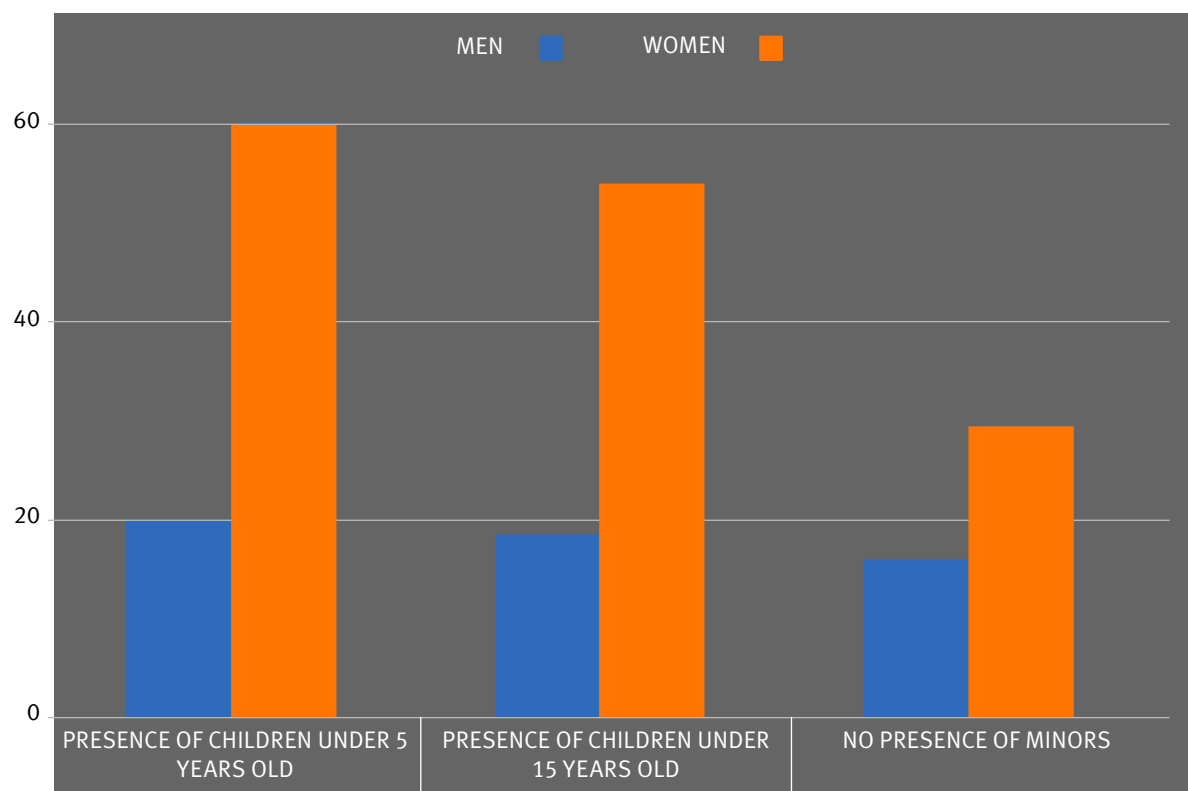
is inescapable and the need for a level playing field regardless of household origin is indispensable.

2 FRAGMENTATION OF TRAJECTORIES IN WOMEN: CARE WORK (MOTHERHOOD AND CARE FOR OLDER ADULTS)

Among the challenges women face, motherhood is one of the greatest obstacles to women's economic empowerment (OECD, 2017). This is largely due to the way gender roles assign a heavier workload to women. Although women are increasingly accessing paid employment, this does not mean that they cease to be the primary individuals responsible for domestic and care work, which results in a “double workday.” According to the ILO Observatory, women are responsible for 76.2% of all hours dedicated to unpaid care work: more than three times that of men, where inequality in the precariousness of the care economy becomes evident (ILO, 2024).

Mexico ranks among the top ten countries with the greatest amount of time devoted to unpaid domestic and care work, with weekly hours dedicated to care being higher when children and adolescents are present in the household (Graph 18).

**GRAPH 18. WEEKLY HOURS DEDICATED TO UNPAID DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK
ACCORDING TO THE PRESENCE OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN THE HOME, BY SEX**



Source: OIT (2024).

Women occupy a predominant role in the care system worldwide, to the extent that they constitute, for example, 70% of the workforce in social and health systems. This placed them on the frontlines of exposure to COVID-19, which increased their risk and reinforced their dual role of social care and private care

within households. Furthermore, the need for health-care increases significantly in the later stages of life, which intensifies the pressure on women caregivers, a situation that is further exacerbated in rural areas (EU-LAC Foundation *et al.* 2023).

In the Latin American region, more than half of self-employed women work part-time schedules (less than 35 hours per week) and the proportion working extremely short hours (less than 20 hours per week) is also high: 1 in 4, nearly double the rate of self-employed men. Many women must resort to jobs with very short working hours due to the time they must dedicate to unpaid work, which results in informal occupations with precarious labor conditions that put their economic security at risk (ILO, 2023). The deterioration of labor conditions in Latin America, in the case of women, represents a setback of more than ten years in their participation in the labor market (ECLAC, 2022).

In Mexico, according to INEGI data⁴⁴, the economic value of unpaid domestic and care work amounted to 8.4 trillion pesos, a sum equivalent to 26.3% of GDP for the total economy. Of this amount, women contributed 71.5% and men 28.5% (INEGI, 2024c). On average, women contributed to their households the equivalent of 86,971 pesos annually through unpaid domestic and care work.

In 2023, the population engaged in Unpaid Household Work (UHW), 52.7% were women and 47.3% men. By

⁴⁴ Health Sector Satellite Account (Inegi, 2024c)

type of activity, women contributed more in areas such as food preparation (80.6%) and cleaning and care of clothing and footwear (77.8%). Men participated more in activities such as shopping and household management (42.1%) and support for other households and volunteer work (36.4%) (INEGI, 2024a).

Women engaged in UHW received no monetary compensation in return, which is considered a double workload that limits their opportunities in the labor market. The challenges persist and the gaps deepen, as domestic work continues to be one of the main reasons for gender inequality both within households and in the labor market, strongly restricting women's social mobility.



Image: In 2023, 47.3% of men made Unpaid Household-Work at <https://icie.mx/permiso-por-enfermedad-de-hijos/>

3 CARE SYSTEMS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD READINESS

Significant changes have taken place in the social protection of early childhood, particularly with regard to childcare services and preschool education, as well as in efforts to extend school hours. There are at least three factors that can considerably influence child well-being: maternity and/or paternity leave, parental education and women's inclusion in the labor market (Signos Vitales, 2024). Furthermore, if both women and men are able to study and work with paid wages, upward social mobility increases considerably. Therefore, a state that implements a care system enabling parents to work or devote more time to their academic training will generate citizens with better opportunities, greater social mobility and well-being (Ortega, 2023).

In Mexico and other Latin American countries, unequal access to development opportunities persists, affecting individuals throughout the life cycle (Robles, 2022). Evidence shows that only 11 of 18 countries provided comprehensive early childhood care (Achaval & Aulicino, 2015). Only 6 countries offer 18 weeks or more of maternity leave and 3 grant parental leave (IPC-IG & UNICEF, 2020). Nine out of 24

countries fail to comply with the minimum 14 weeks established by ILO Convention 183. Among the countries with the shortest duration is Jamaica, which only offers 8 weeks of paid leave. Chile, Venezuela and Brazil stand out for offering 6 months, while Mexico reports 14 weeks, thus meeting the requirements of the ILO Convention (ILO Convention 183).

In 2022, in nine countries, 25% of low-income women did not participate in the labor market due to family responsibilities. Motherhood is an additional limitation, as around 60% of women in households with children under 15 reported not participating in the labor market due to their responsibilities. When women are not engaged in motherhood, the percentage is 18% (ILO, 2024). Regarding paternity leave, when available, it generally does not exceed 5 days. In Mexico, in 2023 an amendment to Article 132 of the Federal Labor Law (LFT) was approved, establishing the obligation for employers to grant 20 working days of paid leave to men who become fathers (with the possibility of extending to 30 days if the mother experiences complications) (Chamber of Deputies, 2023). This represents progress, albeit limited, in the pursuit of equal opportunities, which disproportionately affects women as it still limits fathers' capacity to be actively and meaningfully involved in their children's care.

Around 60% of women in households with children under 15 reported not participating in the labor market due to their responsibilities; while women who are not engaged in motherhood, the percentage is 18% (ILO, 2024).

4 HEALTHCARE SERVICES (SUPPLY, RESOURCES, PEOPLE WITHOUT SOCIAL SECURITY)

Between 2018 and 2023, the country's economic activity grew by 3.7%. In those same years, very few economic activities advanced to a greater extent than the overall economic activity. One of these exceptions is the healthcare sector. The growth of the health sector's GDP was 11.2% (a variation of 108.7 billion pesos), three times greater than the economy as a whole (INEGI, 2024c). This growth accounted for 12.1% of the accumulated growth of the entire Mexican economy. In turn, 57.3% of this growth is explained by the contribution of private companies and households. Of this contribution, 41.2% came from the expansion of private sector activities and 16.1% from household care. The latter grew more than in the past due to the 2020 health crisis.

Given the combination of higher growth in the health sector's GDP and slow growth in the Mexican economy, the health sector's share of national GDP rose from 4% to 4.3%, excluding unpaid health care work. When including the latter (unpaid work), the health sector GDP (known as the health sector with the expanded boundary) grew by 11.1% (a variation of 129.6 billion pesos) (INEGI, 2024c). Unpaid health

care work grew by 10.5% (20.9 billion pesos) (INEGI, 2024c). Between 2018 and 2023, this increase contributed 14.5% of the country's economic growth and the health sector with the expanded boundary rose from 4.8% to 5.2% of national GDP (INEGI, 2024c).

Within the sector, and with some exceptions, growth was widespread. However, five activities recorded negative performance: the manufacturing of health care goods (−6.1% or −.9 billion pesos), dental offices (−3.3% or −1.5 billion pesos), other health care offices (−13.6% or −893 million pesos), health care and social assistance centers and residences (−6.5% or −497 million pesos) and Federal Public Health Administration (Aspf) (−14.3% or −6.8 billion pesos) (INEGI, 2024c).

Among the negatively performing activities, the role of the Aspf stands out. The federal public administration's participation in the health sector has declined. In response to this contraction, the states increased their share by contributing an additional 1.6 billion pesos (a variation of 4.4%) (INEGI, 2024c). However, this increase is insufficient to offset the decline in federal government production, so the net variation of public health administration (federal and state) remains negative (−6.3% or −5.2 billion pesos) (INEGI, 2024c).

Five activities recorded negative performance:

- 1. the manufacturing of health care goods,*
- 2. dental offices,*
- 3. other health care offices,*
- 4. health care and social assistance centers and residences,*
- 5. and Federal Public Health Administration (Aspf) (INEGI, 2024c).*

By contrast, positive growth rates were observed in a wide variety of goods and services. On the services side, noteworthy growth occurred in auxiliary health care services⁴⁵, specialized hospital services, trade in health-related goods, private health insurance and training of health sector personnel. Between 2018 and 2023, these activities registered accumulated growth rates of 35.9% (6.3 billion pesos), 10.4% (7.4 billion pesos), 24.6% (34.4 billion pesos), 51.8% (6.3 billion pesos) and 12.7% (5.3 billion pesos), respectively (INEGI, 2024c). Any of these growth rates surpass those of the vast majority of Mexican economic activities and even the health sector as a whole.

On the production side of health sector goods, three activities stand out: the manufacturing of medicines, the manufacturing of medical supplies and the manufacturing of other health care-related goods. Growth was 27.1% (16 billion pesos), 35.8% (5.8 billion pesos) and 29% (6.5 billion pesos), respectively (INEGI, 2024c). Due to increased activity across the sector,

⁴⁵ According to the System of National Accounts of Mexico (Base year 2018), among the auxiliary activities of health care are the following services: medical and diagnostic laboratories of the private and public sectors, home nursing services, ambulance services, organ banking services and blood banks and other services auxiliary to medical treatment provided by the private and public sectors.

tax revenues via product taxes net of subsidies rose by 23.3% (3.9 billion pesos) (INEGI, 2024c).

General hospital services, the most significant within the health sector, showed less dynamism compared to the aforementioned services and the sector as a whole. The accumulated growth of these services was 7% (14.9 billion pesos) (INEGI, 2024c). In retrospect, this has been the highest rate (absolute and relative) for a comparable period across the last three federal administrations. Between 2006 and 2011, growth was 6.9% (13 billion pesos), while for 2012–2017 ac-

On the production side of health sector goods, three activities stand out: the manufacturing of medicines, the manufacturing of medical supplies and the manufacturing of other health care-related goods.

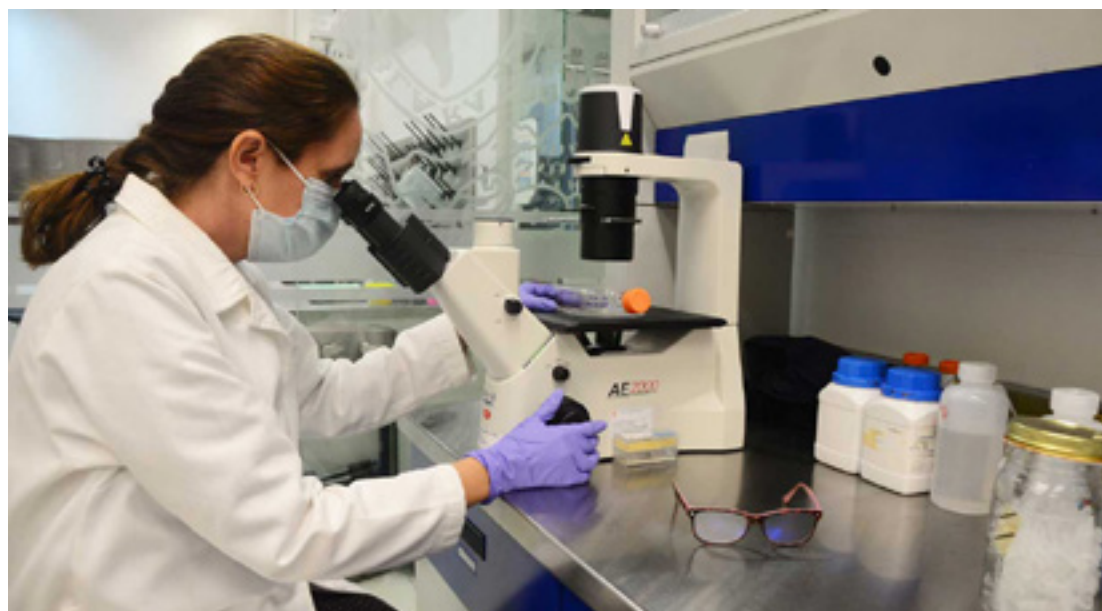


Image: "Cofepris certifies lab from UNAM" at https://unamglobal.unam.mx/global_tv/cofepris-certifica-laboratorio-de-unam/

cumulated growth was -2.7% (-5.6 billion pesos) (INEGI, 2024c). General hospital services had previously undergone a period of prolonged stagnation⁴⁶.

The supply of hospital services (private) may have suffered a decline due to a drop in installed capacity. Between 2008 and 2013, the number of hospitals in the country fell from 3,560 to 2,301 (a variation of -35.4% or $-1,259$ hospitals). The largest reduction was observed in hospitals of other medical specialties (-47.9% or -761 hospitals), followed by general hospitals (-25.3% or -492 hospitals) (INEGI, 2025d). However, in the last decade (2013 to 2023), hospitals have once again increased their presence in the market: during the periods 2013–2018 and 2018–2023, private hospital infrastructure grew by 17.3% (398 hospitals) and 14.5% (391 hospitals), respectively (INEGI, 2025d). In both periods, sustained growth came from general hospitals, which now total the same number as in 2008 (1,945 general hospitals). However, growth in hospitals of other medical specialties was observed only in the 2018–2023 period.

This increase in installed capacity—on the private side—has been accompanied by other market actors.

⁴⁶ The accumulated growth in the period 2012 – 2018 was 1.2% (2.4 billion pesos).



Between 2018 and 2023, the number of medical offices increased by 18.2% (11,445 medical offices) (INEGI, 2025d). The number of offices rose from 62,965 to 74,410 (INEGI, 2025d). This upward trend is not recent. Since records began (2008), medical offices have not stopped growing and only slowed between 2013 and 2018, when they rose from 59,528 to 62,965 (an accumulated variation of 5.8%) (INEGI, 2025d).

At the same time, the growth of offices has been accompanied by the boom in pharmacies. To a large extent, this is a necessary formula given Mexican legislation. Between 2018 and 2023, pharmacies grew by 31.4% (18,258 pharmacies⁴⁷) (INEGI, 2025d). This

⁴⁷ Here we refer to classes 464111 and 464112 of the NAICS

Image: "Mexicans prefer attention at doctors from pharmacies" at <https://politica.expansion.mx/mexico/2022/08/18/mexicanos-prefieren-atenderse-en-consultorios-de-farmacia>

Low-cost consultations, with increases only slightly above inflation, have enabled a balance between public and private sectors. Private sector profits come more from pharmacies (goods) than from the value generated by offices (services).

was the five-year period with the greatest growth, both relatively and in number of establishments, in Mexico's modern history. Growth had slowed in 2013–2018, but rates remained positive (13.8% or 7,068 pharmacies) (INEGI, 2025d), similar to what occurred with medical offices. The expansion of supply has been accompanied by growth in its workforce: in the same five-year period, employment in the trade of health-related goods rose from 197,041 to 254,889 paid positions (an accumulated variation of 29.4%) (INEGI, 2025d).

Between 2018 and 2023, the expansion of offices was largely explained by the increase in the number of establishments in the northern, central and southern regions, with 30.8%, 26.2% and 23.4% of the total increase, respectively (INEGI, 2025d). Meanwhile, the expansion of pharmacies occurred mainly in the central, southern and north-central regions, with 50%, 19.5% and 12.5% of the accumulated variation, respectively (INEGI, 2025d). Although there is a relationship (coupling) in the growth and variation of offices and pharmacies, this relationship does not fully hold in the central and north-central regions. In the first case, the number of pharmacies grew by 9,131

(33.5%) while offices grew by 2,997 (12.9%). In the north-central region, pharmacies increased by 2,278 (25.1%) while offices grew by 1,183 (11%)⁴⁸ (INEGI, 2025d).

This office-pharmacy formula has not yet displaced the production value of the public sector within the overall health sector. This is because the production value of so-called pharmacy-adjacent offices is much lower than that of health services provided by the public administration. In turn, this differential is determined by the market value of services. Low-cost consultations, with increases only slightly above inflation, have enabled a balance between public and private sectors. Private sector profits come more from pharmacies (goods) than from the value generated by offices (services). Between 2018 and 2023, the accumulated growth of general offices was 5.7% (9.9 billion pesos) (INEGI, 2024c). Our forecast is that, if this trend continues, the value generated by pharmacies (third in importance) will surpass that of services (consultations).

Between 2018 and 2023, the expansion of offices was largely explained by the increase in the number of establishments in the northern, central and southern regions, with 30.8%, 26.2% and 23.4% of the total increase, respectively (INEGI, 2025d).

Classification, pharmacies without mini-supermarkets and pharmacies with mini-supermarkets.

⁴⁸The relationship between the growth of pharmacies and practices is weaker as measured by goodness of fit, unlike the other three regions.

5 HOW DOES THE HEALTH SYSTEM HELP ME? PUBLIC GOODS THAT THE PRIVATE SECTOR CANNOT PROVIDE

The withdrawal of the public sector from health services set the tone for the liberalization of the system. Liberalization has led to the reallocation of resources from the economy (households and the private sector) and from the same public sector resources (indirectly through households), granted via direct (unconditional) monetary transfers. In other words, the market structure has been altered both on the supply and demand sides. Between 2018 and 2023, household and government consumption (including social security) in health showed accumulated growth of 18.3% and 8.6%, respectively (INEGI, 2024c).

Government consumption growth (at all levels of government) has been the lowest among all market actors (government, private and households). However, government consumption would be even lower if social security were not included. In 2023, 47.6% of government health consumption came from social security. In 2018, social security accounted for 46.9% of government health consumption (INEGI, 2024c). With an aging population, social security will require greater financial resources as government health spending

continues to contract. That is, if the government's budget (at all levels) does not grow in real terms, social security will increasingly account for health consumption while the population ages.

Household spending has become concentrated in medicines. In 2018, 40% of health consumption (excluding the expanded boundary) was allocated to medicines; by 2023, this had risen to 42.7% (INEGI, 2024c). For the same years, hospital services (general) followed, increasing from 12% to 13.3% of consumption (INEGI, 2024c). Other categories include the manufacturing of health care goods, medical offices, auxiliary health care activities and private health insurance.

Growth in consumption has been heterogeneous, leading to changes in the proportion of spending to greater or lesser degrees, either positively or negatively. Between 2018 and 2023, the five categories with the highest growth were: auxiliary health care activities, hospital services (general), medicines, manufacturing of medical supplies, and training of health personnel, with growth rates of 39.6% (9 billion pesos), 27.4% (16.8 billion pesos), 26.1% (53.6 billion pesos), 242.9% (3.9 billion pesos) and 28.5% (5.1 billion pesos), respectively (INEGI, 2024c).

With an aging population, social security will require greater financial resources as government health spending continues to contract. That is, if the government's budget (at all levels) does not grow in real terms, social security will increasingly account for health consumption while the population ages.

Nevertheless, the increase in household spending has also fueled other activities, such as the financial insurance sector. The accumulated growth of household spending on insurance was 12% (2.6 billion pesos) (INEGI, 2024c), maintaining an upward trend. Direct transfers are normalizing health expenditure flows. Health care may cease to be subject to household economic conditions and budgetary constraints, but it will still be dependent on the federal government's budgetary restrictions.

Between 2018 and 2023, average per capita consumption rose from 4,110.3 to 4,692.3 pesos (at 2018 prices), a variation of 14.2% (582.1 pesos) (INEGI, 2024c). Average household consumption rose from 14,547.4 to 15,619 pesos, a variation of 7.4% (1,071.6 pesos) (INEGI, 2024c). Greater household growth (10.1%) compared to slower population growth (3.6%) produced results of differing magnitude. Our forecast, based on high-frequency data (debit and credit card operations), is that private consumption continued to grow in 2024 and into 2025. It is highly relevant to note that between 2018 and 2024 per capita GDP practically did not grow, meaning the population is now allocating more resources to health. According to the ENIGH 2024, between 2018 and 2024 household

health expenditure grew by 41.4%. In those same years, average annual household spending increased from 4,560 to 6,420 pesos (INEGI, 2025).

Out-of-pocket household health expenditures have increased. Families are contributing more than in the past, not only through expanded (monetary) consumption but also through their contribution to caregiving tasks within the home, which grew substantially with the arrival of the 2020 health crisis. Government consumption remains near historical levels due to population aging and its implications for social security spending.

Were it not for low-cost consultations, the private sector could be larger. It is highly likely that the overall economic activity of the health sector exceeds what current statistics capture. Our forecast is that by 2028 the change in the structure and composition of the market (supply and demand) will become clearer. The expansion of private services spans from the greater presence of pharmacy-adjacent medical offices to high-specialty hospitals, while also giving new impetus to the financial system through health insurance and enabling the expansion of the pharmaceutical industry, which serves both the domestic and export markets.

According to the ENIGH 2024, between 2018 and 2024 household health expenditure grew by 41.4%. In those same years, average annual household spending increased from 4,560 to 6,420 pesos (INEGI, 2025).

On the other hand, it is highly likely that Mexican families' spending is higher than what is reported by ENIGH 2024. National accounts show that out-of-pocket health spending could be two to three times higher. Likewise, although the figures are not perfectly comparable, they serve as a proxy: health consumption recorded through bank cards illustrates this difference. In this sense, both on the supply side (business activity) and on the demand side (private health consumption), there are clear signals of an expanding private industry, while the government's role in the health sector is steadily diminishing.

It is highly likely that Mexican families' spending is higher than what is reported by ENIGH 2024. National accounts show that out-of-pocket health spending could be two to three times higher. Likewise, although the figures are not perfectly comparable, they serve as a proxy: health consumption recorded through bank cards illustrates this difference.

6 ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND INSECURITY

Access to justice refers to the guarantee that individuals can use available legal mechanisms to resolve disputes and protect their rights, regardless of their socioeconomic situation, without hindering their labor trajectory and social mobility. This implies that judicial and administrative institutions must be accessible, efficient and fair, ensuring that individuals can present their cases, receive adequate defense and obtain fair resolutions. Key components of access to justice include the availability of services, ease of access, violence prevention, adequate defense, fair resolutions and the prerequisite that individuals are aware of their rights— all essential elements of a functional rule of law.

As discussed in the section on preconditions for social mobility and throughout this report, the lack of access to justice significantly affects social mobility across the different life cycles of individuals. For the 30 to 59 age group in particular, this lack can have especially significant impacts, since this group largely carries family and economic responsibilities. In general terms, the inability to resolve labor disputes or protect property rights, to name a few examples, can have major consequences, not only for this age group

The lack of access to justice significantly affects social mobility across the different life cycles of individuals. For the 30 to 59 age group in particular, this lack can have especially significant impact, since this group largely carries family and economic responsibilities.

but also by affecting the social mobility of their children. As seen in other age groups, an additional determinant tied to access to justice and the rule of law that jeopardizes social mobility in Mexico is violence. For the 30 to 59 age group, homicide, gender-based violence and extortion are factors that cut short social mobility.

According to the National Urban Public Security Survey (ENSU), in June 2025, 63.2% of the population over 18 years old considered living in their city unsafe, with a higher percentage among women (68.5%) than men (56.7%) (INEGI, 2025j). This represents an increase compared to the last ENSU of December 2024, when approximately 61% of the population over 18 considered living in their city unsafe; in fact, it represents the highest level of perceived insecurity since December 2022. Without doubt, this perception influences the quality of life, mobility, mental health and labor decisions of those in their productive stage.

With regard to homicides, the figures show a similar trend. According to INEGI data, in 2022 a total of 167,900 deaths were recorded among the 25 to 54 age groups. Of these, the 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 age groups had homicide as the leading cause of death (9,495 out of 38,174 deaths (24.9%) and 7,122 out of

TABLE 13. MAIN CAUSE OF DEATH BY AGE
2022–2024

YEAR	HOMICIDES 25–34 YEARS	HOMICIDES 35–44 YEARS	HEART DISEASES 45–54 YEARS	DIABETES MELLITUS 55–64 YEARS
2022	9,495	7,122	12,212	24,296
2023	9,194	6,788	12,427	23,419
2024*	9,754	7,335	12,700	23,699

*Note: INEGI (2023c, 2024h, 2025b)
*The 2024 figures are the preliminary results of the INEGI, published on August 8, 20255.

49,371 deaths (14.4%), respectively) (INEGI, 2023c). In 2023, the total number of deaths from homicides in the 25 to 54 age group declined slightly; nevertheless, homicide remained the leading cause of death for the same age groups (25 to 34 years: 9,194; 35 to 44 years: 6,778) (INEGI, 2024h). According to INEGI’s preliminary figures for 2024, not only did the number of homicides increase, but homicide remained the leading cause of death among people aged 25–34 (9,754) and 35–44 (7,335) (INEGI, 2025b). Together with the most recent data on perceptions of insecurity, these figures significantly illustrate how the risk of homicide has become a determining factor in the lives of the 30 to 59 age group (Table 13).

In June 2025, 63.2% of the population over 18 years old considered living in their city unsafe, with a higher percentage among women (68.5%) than men (56.7%) (INEGI, 2025j). This represents an increase compared to December 2024; it is the highest level of perceived insecurity since December 2022.

In addition, several experts argue that a high incidence of homicides could have a significant effect on reducing life expectancy at birth. We can take 2023 as an example: in that year, there were 799,869 deaths, of which 30,906 were homicides, that is, 3.87% of total deaths. If the 3.87% is applied to life expectancy at birth of 75 years, it can be said that Mexico has lost approximately 2.9 years in its life expectancy at birth. Looking at the available data for 2024, the loss of life expectancy would translate into approximately 3 years (818,437 total deaths, 33,241 homicides). In other words, violence not only represents a physical risk but also a structural obstacle to the personal and social development of the population.

Another relevant factor for the 30 to 59 age group is gender-based violence. Many women in this group face abuse within the home, in the workplace, or in community spaces. While INEGI data indicate that cases of violence against women decreased by 16% between 2016 and 2021, women between 30 and 44 years old still show the second highest incidence of physical, psychological and economic violence, after the 20 to 29 age group. Various sources and experts have long highlighted how impunity and institutional responses represent a critical challenge to preventing and sanctioning gender-based violence. While



Image: "Macho violence reach more than 112 thousand women in 2022" at <https://yociudadano.com.mx/violencia-machista-en-mexico-alcanzo-a-mas-de-112-mil-mujeres-en-2022/>

many complaints are not filed due to fear of reprisals or distrust in institutions, it is estimated that 93% of reported cases do not result in an investigation. Therefore, the obstruction of access to justice plays an important role in assessing how this relates to the social mobility of these victims.

On the other hand, the costs of gender-based violence for society are poorly documented but have a decisive impact on social mobility. World Bank estimates indicate that gender-based violence generates an associated cost of up to 3.7% of a country's GDP. In Mexico, the figure is even more alarming: according to the Mexico Peace Index 2025, the economic cost of violence in general in 2024 amounted to 4.9 trillion pesos, representing nearly 18% of national GDP (IEP, 2025). Gender-based violence accounts for a significant share of this, as it entails costs such as medical care, support programs, or legal services, as well as indirect costs such as loss of productivity. In line with this, INEGI estimated in 2018 that each woman who has been a victim of violence lost 30 days of paid work and 28 days of unpaid work (Rasso, 2025). Consequently, many women are forced to leave their jobs, which negatively impacts their economic autonomy but also generates significant losses for companies and reduces female participation in the econo-

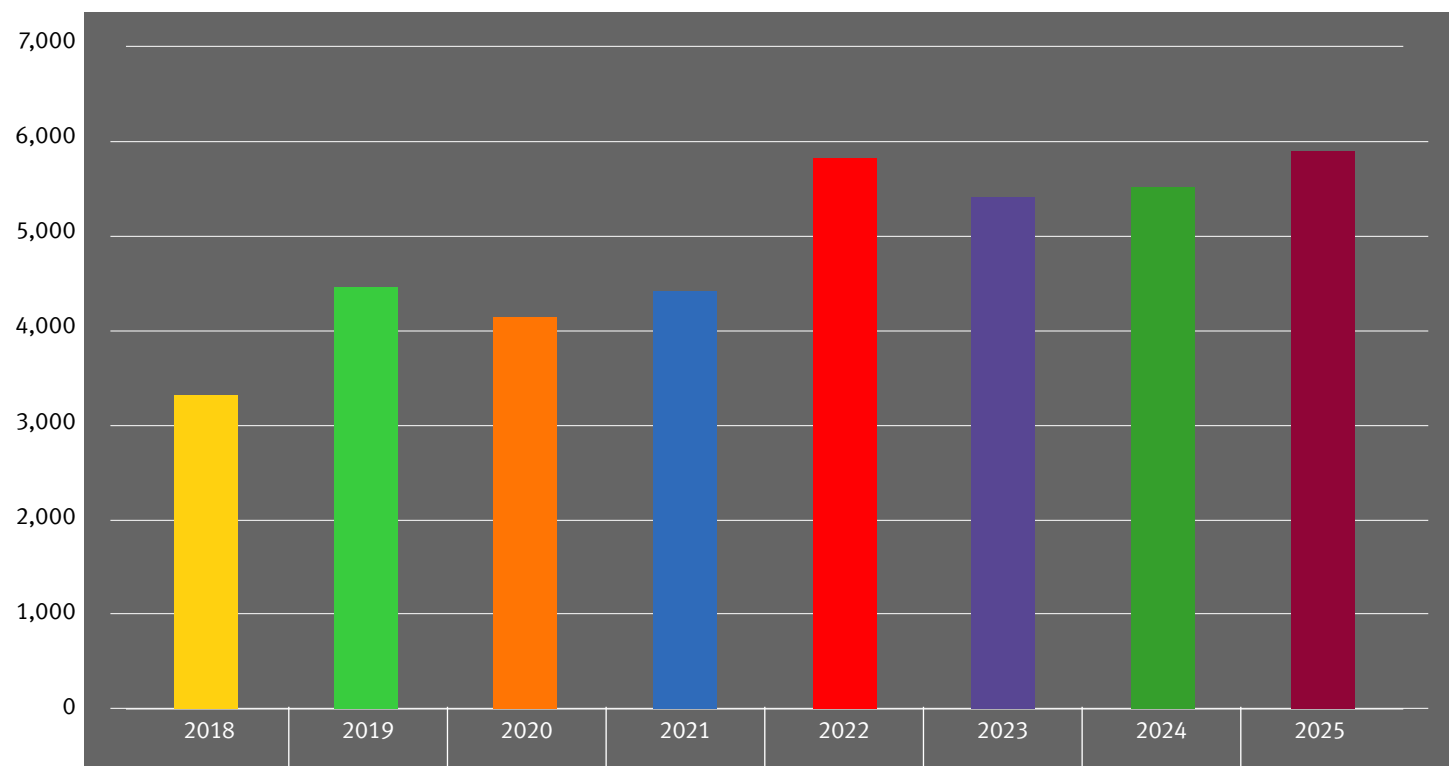
my, and represents an obstacle to women's social mobility.

In an attempt to guarantee more rights for women, President Sheinbaum created the new Secretariat for Women and promoted several (constitutional) reforms from the beginning of her administration. However, when analyzing the budget to combat violence against women, a 14% decrease is observed compared to the previous year (Perez, 2024). Fundacion Fundar highlights that this reduction means fewer resources for support, care and prevention programs addressing violence against women (Perez, 2024). This undoubtedly has negative implications for the effective protection of women, their access to justice and ultimately their social mobility.

Finally, extortion has become another determining factor for the social mobility of the 30 to 59 age group. In general, information from the Peace Index indicates that extortion increased by 45% between 2015 and 2025. According to the most recent SESNSP data, in just the first half of 2025, a total of 5,887 victims of extortion were recorded (SESNSP, 2025b). What stands out here is not only the fact that this figure represents the highest since records began, but also that the 30 to 59 age group accounts for more

Finally, extortion has become another determining factor for the social mobility of the 30 to 59 age group. In general, information from the Peace Index indicates that extortion increased by 45% between 2015 and 2025.

GRAPH 19. VICTIMS OF EXTORTION IN THE FIRST HALF OF EACH YEAR
2018–2025



Source: In-house elaboration with information from Noguera (2025).

than 60% of these victims. As previously noted in this report and in earlier reports by Signos Vitales, many cases of violence and extortion go unreported. The government of Claudia Sheinbaum responded to the most recent increase in extortion with the announcement of an anti-extortion strategy in July 2025. Nevertheless, several experts have warned

that the likelihood of increasing the percentage of reports and, above all, improving the success rate is minimal (Graph 19).

In conclusion, it can be asserted that the 30 to 59 age group in Mexico faces a series of structural challenges that limit its social mobility and, consequent-

ly, its prosperity. Despite some progress in reducing poverty, the lack of equal opportunities remains a significant obstacle, with a high persistence of inherited poverty, particularly in the southern region of the country. Parents' education and income are determining factors in academic and economic achievement and inequality in these areas perpetuates low social mobility. Furthermore, women in this group face greater barriers, especially in terms of access to employment opportunities and the double workday resulting from their predominant role in unpaid domestic work. Gender-based violence severely affects the quality of life, mental health, and employment opportunities of this population, while the economic cost associated with gender-based violence negatively impacts women's productivity and economic participation. Extortion, which primarily affects this age group, further limits job opportunities and economic growth, perpetuating a cycle of insecurity and poverty. Homicides cut short the lives of victims but also gravely affect those of their families. This contributes to a reality of stagnation in social mobility, where many Mexicans find themselves trapped in conditions of poverty and violence, without full access to justice that would allow them to improve their quality of life and reach their potential. In summary,

structural inequalities, violence, and the lack of access to essential resources remain insurmountable barriers for many adults between 30 and 59 years old, affecting not only their individual well-being but also Mexico's development and economic future.

The 30 to 59 age group in Mexico faces a series of structural challenges that limit its social mobility and, consequently, its prosperity. Despite some progress in reducing poverty, the lack of equal opportunities remains a significant obstacle, with a high persistence of inherited poverty, particularly in the southern region of the country. Parents' education and income are determining factors in academic and economic achievement and inequality in these areas perpetuates low social mobility.





**7 OLDER
ADULTS**
60 and more

<https://diariobasta.com/2023/09/25/casi-el-50-de-mexicanos-seran-ancianos-en-2070-ucsj/>

7 OLDER ADULTS « 60 and more

Population aging in Mexico has become a structural challenge that compromises the country's social and economic sustainability. The end of the demographic bonus and the increase in older adults outside the labor force have raised the dependency ratio, limiting the State's ability to sustain an inclusive model of social mobility. Although the expansion of the Pension para el Bienestar has allowed more than 86% of people over 65 to receive income from the State. This scheme has largely incentivized exit from the labor market and, being universal, has disproportionately benefitted middle and upper strata,

reducing its redistributive effect and deepening regional inequalities.

Beyond the economic dimension, the reality of older adults reflects inequalities accumulated over the course of life. Women face greater vulnerability due to fragmented work trajectories and an overload of unpaid caregiving tasks, while access to health services remains limited and unequal, precisely when they are most needed. Taken together, these conditions show that aging is not only a demographic issue but also a challenge of social cohesion and fiscal sus-

The expansion of the Pension para el Bienestar has allowed more than 86% of people over 65 to receive income from the State. This scheme being universal, has also benefitted middle and upper strata, reducing its redistributive effect and deepening regional inequalities.

tainability, one that threatens to perpetuate inequality and increase pressure on younger generations.

1 INCREASE IN THE DEPENDENCY RATIO: AT THE SUNSET OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC BONUS

Social programs have led younger people (15 to 19 years old) and older adults (65 and over) to leave the labor market. Between the first quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2025, the economically inactive population (EIP) (outside the labor market) grew by 4.32 million people (an increase of 11.5%) (INEGI, 2025g). Over the past seven years, the share of the population outside the labor market receiving these transfers rose from 28.1% (10.521 million people) to 39.6% (16.539 million people)⁴⁹ of the total (INEGI, 2025g). Thus, the EIP receiving some form of government support grew by 6.0189 million people (a variation of 57.2%) (INEGI, 2025g).

Under the government of Claudia Sheinbaum, government support programs have slowed in growth but have remained at the same rate reached under

⁴⁹ The comparison is made with respect to the first quarter of 2018 since the ENOE Expanded Questionnaire (National Occupation and Employment Survey), from which the results of government support come, is only carried out in the first quarter of each year.

her predecessor (Lopez Obrador), with coverage extending to 40 out of every 100 Mexicans outside the labor force (those neither working nor seeking employment). This coverage differs considerably across age groups and regions. Over the same seven-year period, only two age groups saw increases in coverage: older adults (65 and over) and young people between 15 and 19 years old. As of the first quarter of 2025, 86.5% of people aged 65 and over receive some type of support (12.2798 million older adults) (INEGI, 2025g). Coverage for this age group within the EAP reaches 77.5% (2.5974 million older adults), while for those in the EIP it reaches 89.3% (9.6824 million older adults) (INEGI, 2025g).

Between the first quarter of 2018 and the same quarter of 2025, the number of people aged 65 and over in the EAP receiving some type of support grew by 1.473 million (131%) (INEGI, 2025g). However, the population in the same age group within the EIP receiving support grew by 5.8551 million people (153%) (3.3497 million women and 2.5053 million men) (INEGI, 2025g). This figure accounts for 97.3% of the increase in the EIP during the same period. Of this variation, 5.6631 million older adults declared themselves “not available” (96.7% of the cumulative variation) (not willing to work for non-economic reasons

As of the first quarter of 2025, 86.5% of people aged 65 and over receive some type of support (12.2798 million older adults) (INEGI, 2025g).

at the time of the survey), while only 192,000 stated they would be willing to re-enter the labor market if they had the opportunity (“available”) (3.3% of the cumulative variation) (INEGI, 2025g). The evidence suggests that broader coverage of social programs has motivated a massive exit from the labor market among people aged 65 and over. This likely has a positive effect on social mobility, as those who work can allocate more resources to their children and less to supporting their parents.

At the regional level, the south has the highest coverage of government transfers, followed by the northwest, north–center and center, with 90.2%, 89.9%, 85.7% and 85.5% of adults aged 65 and over, respectively (INEGI, 2025g). Between the first quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2025, the growth in beneficiaries was 98.9%, 129.5%, 138.2% and 171.4% in each of these regions (INEGI, 2025g). By contrast, the region with the lowest coverage is the north, with 83% of the population in this age group, though it saw a growth of 219.8% in beneficiaries over the past seven years (INEGI, 2025g).

The north tends to receive the same proportion of government support as other regions, but required more aggressive expansion to achieve this. Nearly two out

of every three supports for older adults are concentrated in the south and central regions (63.2% of the total) (INEGI, 2025g). Likewise, as of the first quarter of 2025, 66.8% of older adults within the EAP (working or seeking employment) are located in the south and center regions, while the northwest contributes a smaller proportion of the total (7.2%) (INEGI, 2025g).

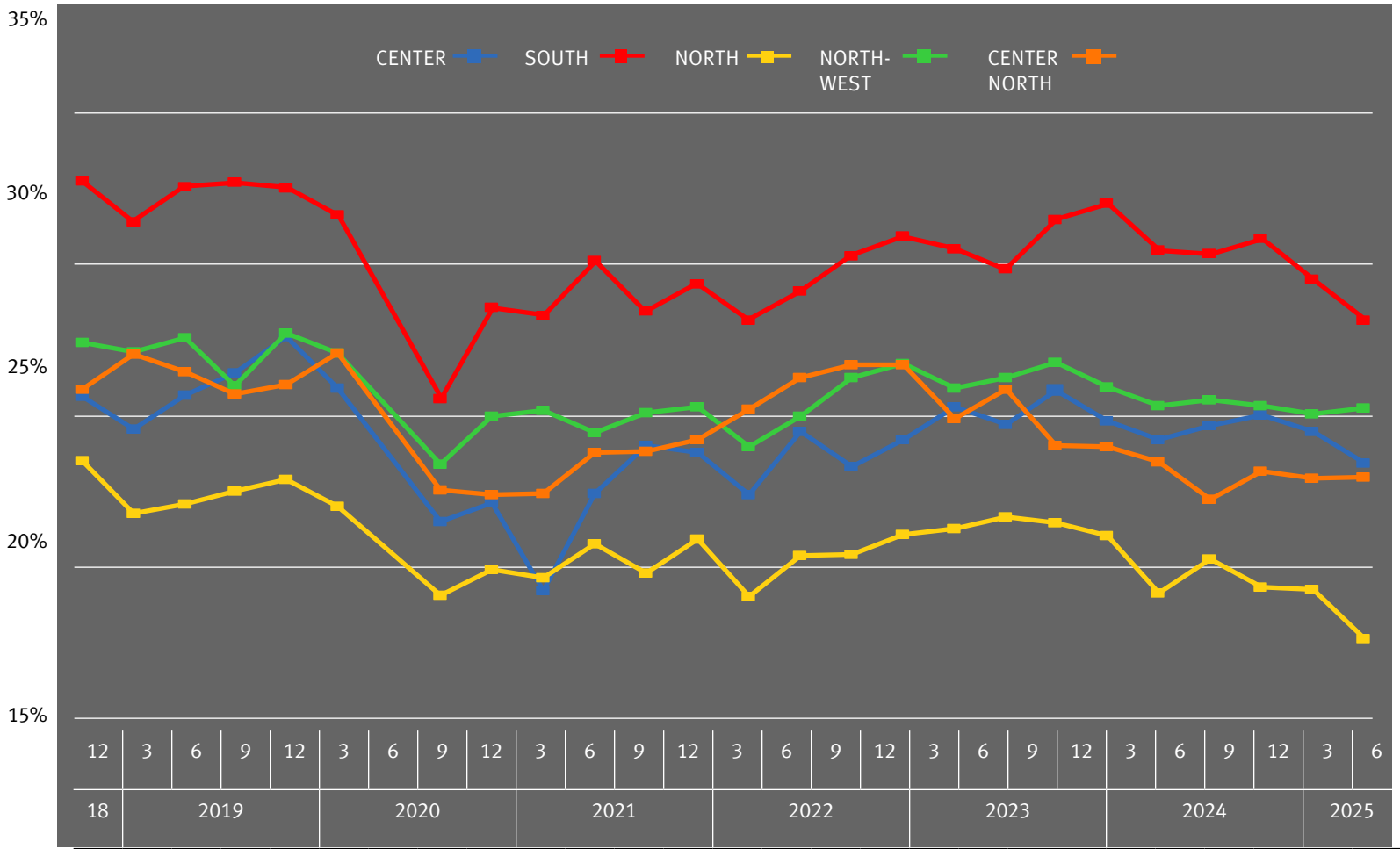
Greater coverage of transfers is inducing labor market exit in the more prosperous regions and occurring more slowly in the south. In the first quarter of 2018, the labor force participation rate of older adults in the north, north–center and center regions was 23.5%, 27.1% and 26.3%, respectively (INEGI, 2025g). By the first quarter of 2025, participation in these same regions had fallen to 17.6%, 23% and 23.4% (INEGI, 2025g). Over the same years, the south recorded the highest labor force participation rate among older adults nationwide, with 29.5% and 28.2%. Meanwhile, the northwest showed the most conservative reduction, dropping from 26% to 25.2% (INEGI, 2025g). In other words, the increase in coverage has not induced labor market exit to the same degree (Graph 20).

Between the first quarter of 2018 and the same quarter of 2025, the EAP of older adults in the north in-

Under the rule of Claudia Sheinbaum, government support programs have slowed in growth but have remained at the same rate, with coverage extending to 40 out of every 100 Mexicans outside the labor force.

GRAPH 20. LABOR PARTICIPATION OF OLDER ADULTS PERCENTAGE BY REGION
FOURTH QUARTER 2018 –FIRST QUARTER 2025

LABOR PARTICIPATION
OF OLDER ADULTS



Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2025g).

creased by only 3.6% (14,200 older adults) (INEGI, 2025g), the lowest rate and number in the country. By contrast, over the same period, the northwest, south and central regions recorded increases of 39.9% (69,000), 31.1% (214,300) and 25.4% (269,900), respectively (INEGI, 2025g).

In the past seven years, two population groups have altered the structure of the labor market: young people and older adults. In addition to the older adult population, the coverage of social programs grew considerably among young people aged 15 to 19. Between the first quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2025, growth in government transfers was 39.6%, or 947,763 young people (INEGI, 2025g). Specifically, lower population growth (a variation of -0.8%) and greater availability of government support led coverage in this age group outside the labor force to increase from 24.4% to 35.6% (INEGI, 2025g). However, labor market exit for this group was less pronounced than in the first case. During the same period, the number of young people aged 15 to 19 who joined the EIP grew by 0.48% or 39,271 young people (INEGI, 2025g). At the same time, this group reduced its labor force participation by -5.2%, or -168,937 young people (INEGI, 2025g).

Population aging has been compounded by a rapid exit from the labor market, primarily among older adults, largely due to the expansion of social program coverage. This has the immediate effect of contracting the potential labor force and reducing the pace of EAP growth. The combined effect results in a closer relationship between workers (EAP) and dependent population (older adults). In the first quarter of 2018, the proportion of dependent older adults was 13.9%. By the first quarter of 2025, this ratio was 17.9% (INEGI, 2025g). For every 100 people in the labor market (working or seeking work), there are 18 older adults outside it.

2 CARE AND LIFE DYNAMICS

Once individuals reach old age, after facing a life marked by inequalities, they experience the difficulties of living independently, both financially and in terms of health. Women in particular face greater inequalities since they tend to assume a larger share of domestic and caregiving duties, tasks traditionally delegated to women almost by inertia.

Women make up the majority of older adults in nearly every country in the world. This phenomenon, known as the “feminization” of aging (Salgado-de Snyder,

Globally, women outnumber men beginning around ages 30 to 40 and this numerical advantage increases with age. Data from the United Nations (UN) show that around the year 2000, there were 190 women for every 100 men among the oldest elderly worldwide.

2007), is observed universally because women tend to live longer than men. Globally, women outnumber men beginning around ages 30 to 40 and this numerical advantage increases with age. Data from the United Nations (UN) show that around the year 2000, there were 190 women for every 100 men among the oldest elderly worldwide.

In Mexico, by 2023, women aged 65 and older represented 4.4% of the total population, while men accounted for 3.8%. According to INEGI (2024), the population group that will experience the fastest growth in the coming years will be people aged 65 and older, rising from 10.8 million in 2023 to 26.8 million in 2050, more than doubling in this period. Older women will account for 54.0% of this group.

According to the National Survey on Health and Aging in Mexico (INEGI, n. d.a), from age 53 onward the proportion of women increases with age, meaning that the older the age, the higher the number of women compared to men. The percentage of women relative to the total population was 54.3% among those aged 53 to 59; 55.7% among those aged 60 to 69; 52.8% among those aged 70 to 79; and 52.7% among those aged 80 and over (INEGI, n. d. a).

For this reason, during old age more women than men

are without a partner, placing them in a vulnerable position due to their primarily economic dependence during youth. The participation of older women in social and economic life has been extremely limited and their social role has largely depended on their position as daughters, wives, or mothers throughout their lives.

In addition, older women play a very important role in family caregiving strategies. In three-generation households in Mexico, they are the main providers of childcare, caring for nearly 40% of children up to 6 years old, equivalent to the entire preschool system (Talamas, 2023). In Mexico, there is also a sharp di-

There is also a sharp division between the traditional roles of older men and women and their consequences represent the gender dimension of aging (Lopez and Aranco, 2019).



Image: Participation of older women in social life at <https://www.guiainfantil.com/recetas/internacionales/recetas-tipicas-de-abuelas-latinas-para-los-ninos/>

vision between the traditional roles of older men and women and their consequences represent the gender dimension of aging (Lopez and Aranco, 2019). Women are vulnerable due to their relatively low level of education, limited participation in economic activities throughout their lives and the lack of institutional protection that this may entail.

INEGI and Inmujeres (2024) report that labor force participation rates for women aged 60 and older are three times lower than for women aged 30 to 39 and 40 to 49 (20.5%, 61% and 61.2%, respectively). Moreover, labor participation decreases as the number of children increases (22.2% for 1–2 children and 19.6% for 3 or more children). Added to this is the fact that older adults have lower average educational attainment compared to other age groups. The population over 60 has an average of just over 6 years of schooling, while young people aged 20 to 29 average nearly 12 years. The average number of years of schooling among those aged 65 and over is lower for women (5.5 years) than for men (8.5) (INEGI and Inmujeres, 2024).

It is natural to assume that if younger generations have more years of schooling, the number of people who cannot read or write (illiteracy) has declined over time. In 1970 in Mexico, there were 26 illiterate people

for every 100 inhabitants; this number decreased to 5 per 100 people in 2020. Analyzing illiteracy by age groups reveals that the challenge is greater among those aged 60 to 74 (1.3 million people) compared to younger groups. The challenge persists even though the Mexican government has declared the country free of illiteracy⁵⁰ (Blancas, 2025).

We can see so far that even in adulthood, the outlook is more complex for women than for men. The life trajectory of a man generally consists of high participation in economic activities, relatively little interaction with social and family networks and limited familiarity with the health system. These two trajectories imply different challenges for each sex in old age, meaning that public actions must target men and women with different emphases.

Unfortunately, some gender roles remain entrenched within families even among older adults. Evidence shows that men are less likely to engage in caregiving for dependents (children and/or older adults),

Some gender roles remain entrenched within families even among older adults. Evidence shows that men are less likely to engage in caregiving for dependents (children and/or older adults), while women show an increase in the frequency of this task.

⁵⁰The Director of the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) in Mexico announced a distinction for Mexico by UNESCO as a country “free of illiteracy.” Although some countries have declared achieving an illiteracy rate of less than 4% as a symbolic indicator of eradicating illiteracy, UNESCO has not adopted or endorses these methodologies as part of its official policy (Blancas, 2025).

while women show an increase in the frequency of this task. In 2020, there were 15.5 million people aged 60 and older in Mexico, representing just over 12% of the total population. However, the needs of an adult and those of an older adult are completely different, as the latter require greater attention and care. Nearly 7 out of 10 older adults require some type of health service (73.9%), many of these needs relating to conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and overweight, among others.

Globally, accessing health care is not always easy and in Mexico, older adults face multiple barriers. These barriers are not only related to the costs of care (such as paying for consultations or medicines) but also to factors such as gender, marital status, level of education and place of residence. For example, older women who are single, divorced, or widowed and who perceive their health as poor, face greater challenges in obtaining medical care. According to the 2020 Population and Housing Census, eight out of ten older adults have some type of health service affiliation, with 54.6% being women and 45.4% men.

When it comes to health, adversities persist. Nearly 1 in 2 older adults lack any proof of vaccination (49%). In addition, only 30.4% have received the

pneumococcal vaccine, 52.9% the tetanus and diphtheria (Td) vaccine and 57.7% the influenza vaccine (Shamah *et al.* 2024). Likewise, older adults face increasing needs to live independently inside and outside the home (shopping, driving, using transport, taking medication, hygiene, etc.). These needs grow with age: the dependency ratio for these activities is 18.7% for those aged 60 to 69 and 62.8% for those over 80. The differences are also marked by place of residence (urban 22.9% vs rural 44.5%) and gender (21.6% men vs 33.3% women). These figures provide insight into the possible needs of older adults and, with them, the demand for health and care services.

3 POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION IN OLDER ADULTS

One of the challenges for this age group is the persistent levels of poverty and the existence of social deprivation. According to INEGI (2025b), between 2016 and 2024 the percentage of older adults living in poverty decreased by 18.9 percentage points, falling from 42.5% to 23.6%. In 2018, the percentage of older adults living in poverty was 43.2%; by 2020 it was 37.9%; and in 2022 it stood at 31.1%. These data show an improvement in the situation of older adults, representing a positive outcome of the Lopez Obra-

Between 2016 and 2024 the percentage of older adults living in poverty decreased by 18.9 percentage points, falling from 42.5% to 23.6%.

In 2018, the percentage of older adults living in poverty was 43.2%; by 2020 it was 37.9%; and in 2022 it stood at 31.1% (INEGI (2025b)).

dor administration, as the proportion of people living under conditions of poverty and/or extreme poverty was reduced—an important achievement particularly at this stage of life. The universal pension has had a highly significant impact (Graph 21).

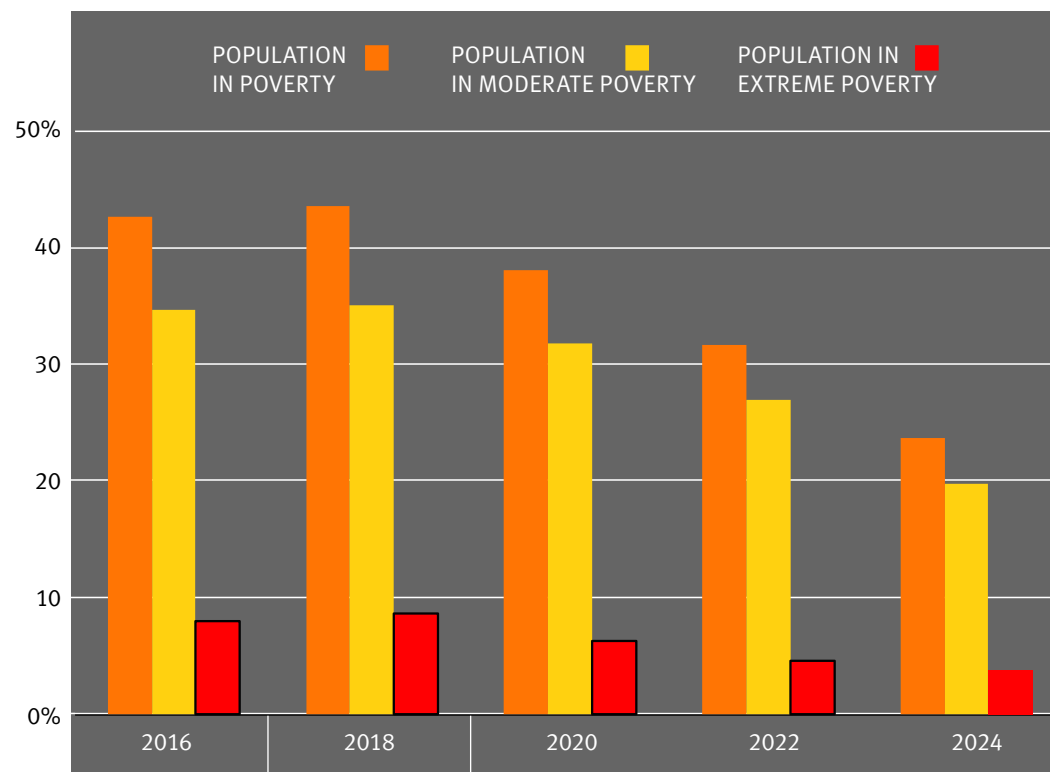
However, social deprivations remain persistent. Although reductions in social deprivations have occurred over the years, by 2024 the deprivation related to access to health services experienced unprecedented increases, being 2.6 times higher in 2024 than it was in 2016 (9.5% and 25%, respectively) (INEGI, 2024b). This has occurred despite the fact that the health needs of the population in this specific age group are increasing (Graph 22).

To identify people living in poverty, the dimension of economic well-being is analyzed based on the income available for the acquisition of goods and services⁵¹. In 2022, 37.5% of the population aged 65 and over had an income below the income poverty line (LPI) and 8.8% had an income below the extreme income poverty line (LPEI). In 2024, these percentages

⁵¹ Specifically, the Total Current Income Per Capita (TCPI) is considered as the result of dividing the sum of the monetary and non-monetary perceptions of all the members of the household by the number of people in the household according to the age of those who make it up (Coneval, 2021).

**GRAPH 21. PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION 65 OR OVER
IN POVERTY AND EXTREME POVERTY**

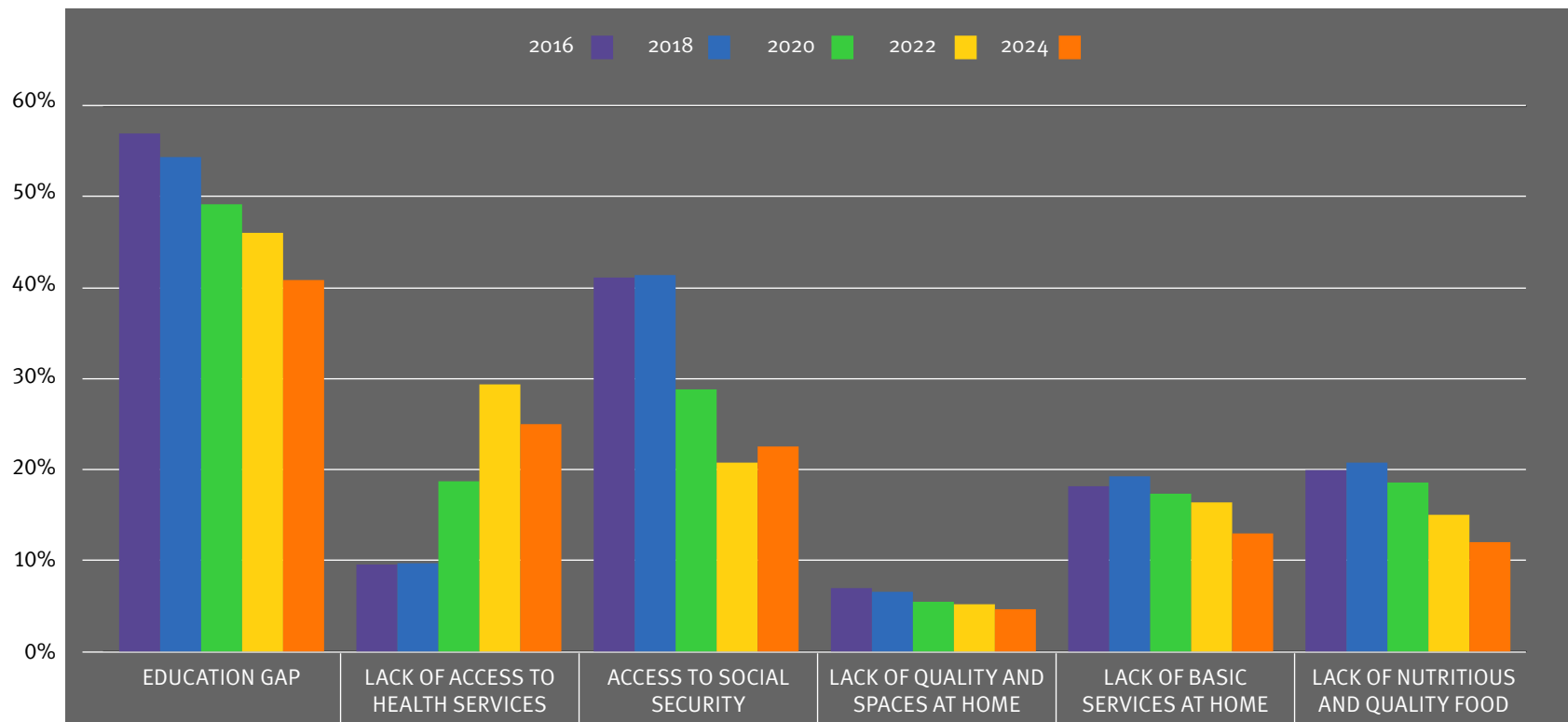
2016–2024



Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2025b).

GRAPH 22. INDICATORS OF SOCIAL DEPRIVATION FOR PEOPLE AGED 65 OR OVER

2016–2024



Source: In-house elaboration with data from INEGI (2025b).

were lower, at 28.4% and 6.6%, respectively (INEGI, 2025k). This indicates that older adults experienced a better income situation than in previous years.

According to the classification of Total Current Per Capita Income (ICTPC), monetary transfers⁵² were the main source of income for people aged 65 and over (47.2%). These flows include pensions and retirement benefits, severance payments, scholarships, donations from non-governmental organizations, remittances and social program benefits. The second source of income was wages from subordinate work (30.3%). In this section, we will focus on pensions, specifically government-provided pensions (non-contributory⁵³).

One of the most representative programs of the 2018–2024 administration in addressing the needs of older adults is the Older Adults Pension (PAM), not only in terms of coverage but also with respect to budget allocation. Although there has been an increase in the

⁵² The most important monetary transfers for older people were: 1) contributory pensions, 2) non-contributory pensions (due to social programs) and 3) those from other households (Coneval, 2021).

⁵³ Also called social pensions: they are financed with current expenses without a contribution from workers, employers or public institutions. In Mexico it is the Pension for older adults and the pension for people with disabilities (Macias, 2024).

coverage of social programs, much of this growth is due to the expansion of the Older Adults Pension (PAM), while the rest of the programs have not received significant promotion or reinforcement. Figure 23 shows how PAM rose from 11% in 2018 to 23.3% in 2024 (INEGI, 2025k), indicating that it is the program with the greatest share among all social programs each year (Graph 23)

In 2024, the average total income for people aged 60 and over was 9,687 pesos per month. This income was lower for women compared to men (7,010 vs. 12,629 pesos). Likewise, in 2024, households composed solely of people aged 65 and over reported an income 30.7% lower than the average for all households (INEGI, 2025).

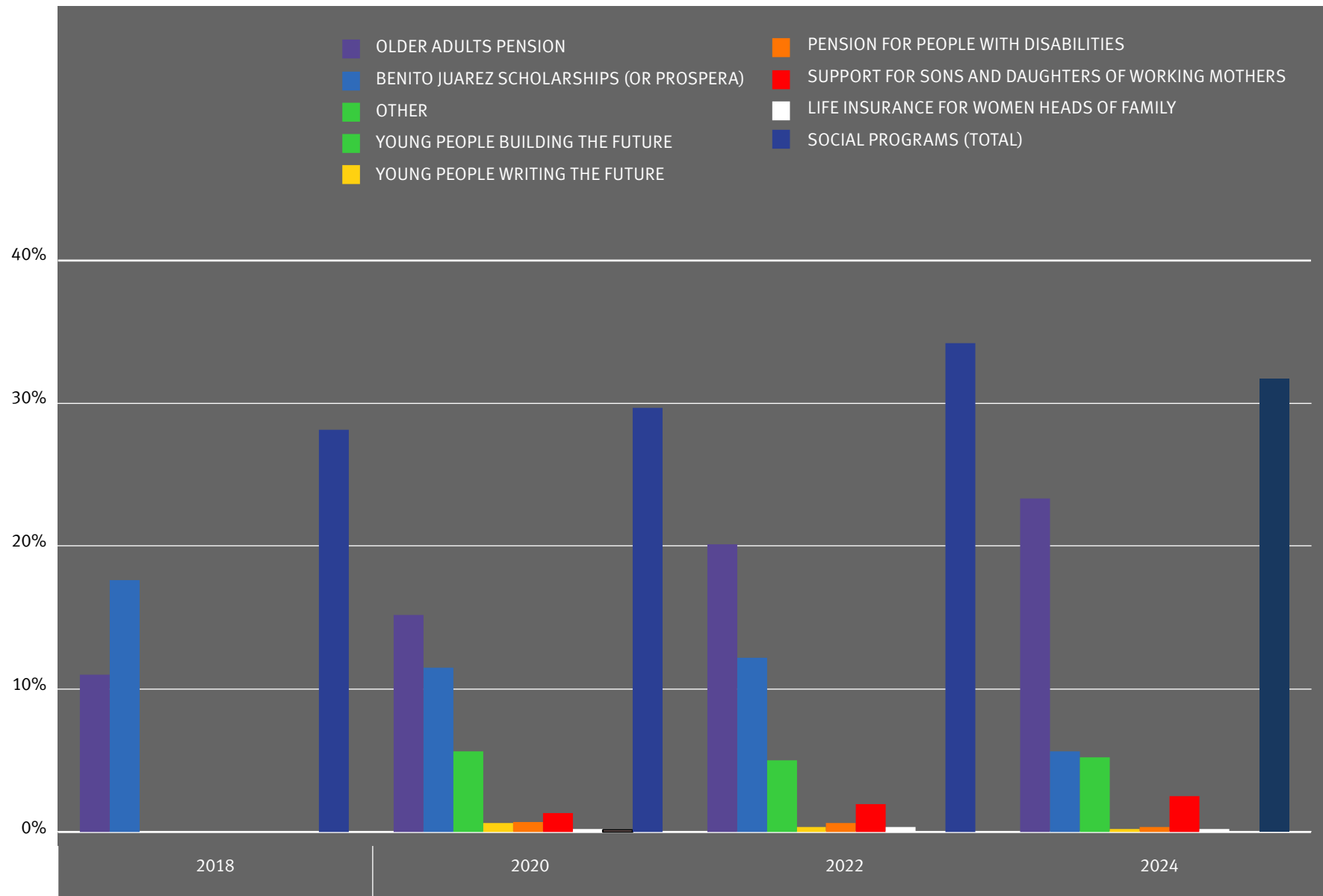
Regarding income from the Older Adults Pension (PAM), there is clear regressivity. In other words, those who need it the most receive less money. The average amount reported for Decile I was 2,435 pesos per person per month, while Decile X received 3,170 pesos⁵⁴ (INEGI, 2025). This is 2.9 times more than they received in 2018, which contributed to poverty reduction for this age group.

⁵⁴ Constant 2024 Mexican pesos.

In 2022, 37.5% of the population aged 65 and over had an income below the income poverty line (LPI) and 8.8% had an income below the extreme income poverty line (LPEI). In 2024, these percentages were lower, at 28.4% and 6.6%, respectively (INEGI, 2025k). This indicates that older adults experienced a better income situation than in previous years.

GRAPH 23. AVERAGE COVERAGE OF THE OLDER ADULTS PROGRAM (PAM) AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS

2018, 2020, 2022 AND 2024



Source: Jaramillo-Molina, 2025.

4 CONTRIBUTORY AND NON-CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS

Between 2018 and 2024, the growth of pensions (both contributory and non-contributory) paid by the federal government amounted to 805 billion pesos (a 97.6% increase). Contributory pensions (Budgetary Branch 19) grew by 388 billion pesos (a 49.9% increase), while non-contributory pensions grew by 417 billion pesos (Mexico Evalua, 2024). Non-contributory pensions showed a slight edge over contributory ones, representing 51.8% of the increase. In the same six-year period, given the differential in growth rates and the higher growth of non-contributory pensions, the latter have gone from representing 95.7% to 76.3% of public pension spending (Macias, A., 2024). The total pension expenditure rose from representing 15.8% to 29.6% of government revenues (Mexico Evalua, 2024).

The increase in the share of pensions over revenues comes from two sources: sustained pension growth and low growth in federal government revenues. Between 2002 and 2024, federal government revenues increased by 89% (a variation of 2.588 trillion pesos), while pensions paid by the federal government (Budgetary Branch 19 and non-contributory)



Image: Bienestar Pension 2025 reopens registration for older adults support at <https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/nacional/2024/11/19/pension-del-bienestar-2025-arranca-el-registro-para-el-apoyo-a-los-adultos-mayores/>

Regarding income from the Older Adults Pension (PAM), there is clear regressivity. In other words, those who need it the most receive less money. The average amount reported for Decile I was 2,435 pesos per person per month, while Decile X received 3,170 pesos (INEGI, 2025). (INEGI, 2025).

increased by 600% (a variation of 1.397 trillion pesos) (Mexico Evalua, 2024). However, in the last six years, revenues only grew by 300 billion pesos compared to 805 billion pesos for pensions (Mexico Evalua, 2024). The pension-to-revenue growth ratio was 2.7 to 1. For every peso of revenue growth, pensions increased by 2 pesos and 70 cents. The increase in non-contributory pensions has led to a new social and institutional arrangement in light of the limited growth of public revenues. Between 2018 and 2024, expenditure on the Older Adults Pension program rose from 47.9 to 465 billion pesos (an 870.8% increase) (Mexico Evalua, 2024). Alongside the growth of this program, spending on subsidies in other areas declined, including agriculture, local public security, science and technology, education, environment, culture, health and housing. This expansion has meant that, in the same years, these pensions went from representing 5.5% to 41.8% of total subsidy spending (Mexico Evalua, 2024).

In retrospect, the reallocation did not lead to an overall increase in subsidies. Although between 2018 and 2024 subsidy spending rose considerably (a variation of 239 billion pesos), subsidies had already undergone a series of cuts starting in 2016. Between 2015 and 2019, subsidies fell by -21.3% (-229 bil-

lion pesos) (Mexico Evalua, 2024). In 2024, subsidy spending was only 3% (a variation of 37 billion pesos) above the level observed in 2015 (the previous historical maximum) (Mexico Evalua, 2024). When looking at per capita subsidy spending, in 2024 it amounted to 8,410 pesos. In 2015, per capita subsidy spending was 8,786 pesos (Mexico Evalua, 2024). In other words, in per capita terms, the variation remains negative (-4.3% or -376 pesos) and barely exceeds by 0.14% the level observed in 2014, which was 8,398 pesos (Mexico Evalua, 2024).

In terms of distribution and allocation, pensions in Mexico are regressive. Within contributory pensions, most of the funds are allocated to higher-income groups. In particular, “IMSS pensions allocate 70% of the contributed funds to the top 30% of the population with the highest incomes. By contrast, the bottom half of the population receives barely 13% of these resources. As for ISSSTE pensions, more than 50% of spending is directed to the top 10% of the population, while the first five deciles do not surpass 4%” (Gonzalez, A., October 11, 2023).

Non-contributory pensions were no exception and, in the last five years, followed the same path as contributory ones. These pensions are allocated to high-

In the last six years, revenues only grew by 300 billion pesos compared to 805 billion pesos for pensions (Mexico Evalua, 2024). For every peso of revenue growth, pensions increased by 2 pesos and 70 cents.

er-income groups rather than those with the lowest incomes. The lowest-income decile receives 2.4% of total transfers, while the highest-income decile captures 8.3% of non-contributory pensions (Mexico Evalua, 2024). Half of the beneficiaries, those with the lowest incomes, receive 36.7% of the transfers, while the half of beneficiaries with the highest incomes receive nearly two-thirds (63.3% of non-contributory pensions) (Mexico Evalua, 2024).

The evidence shows that the universalization of non-contributory pensions, following the reform of Article 4 of the Constitution, altered income-level allocation. “Before 2019, non-contributory pensions were primarily targeted at households in the first six deciles. However, the universalization of non-contributory pensions beginning in 2019 made public policy regressive and since 2020, pensions have been distributed among income deciles 6 through 9...” (Gonzalez, A., October 11, 2023).

In this sense, the description provided by CIEP holds true: pensions in Mexico are fragmented, “and this causes [the pension system] to be unequal, opaque and unsustainable” (Macias, A., 2024). Despite this significant fragmentation, the IMSS covers approximately 75% of pensioners (Macias, A., 2024). Since



Image: Women are more vulnerable due to the relatively lower education level, fewer participation in economic activities and limited institutional protection at <https://movimientociudadano.mx/replica-de-medios/5-claves-que-retratan-la-situacion-de-los-adultos-mayores>

the reforms to the Social Security Law in 1995 and the ISSSTE Law, all private sector (formal) employees and public sector employees have had an individual account in the Retirement Savings System (SAR). In turn, these accounts, which contribute to IMSS or ISSSTE, are managed by private financial institutions (Afore).

With the most recent pension reform of December 2020, the assets managed by Afores are expected to rise from 20% to 54% of GDP by 2040 (Serrano, C., July 22, 2025). According to projections from the Bank of Mexico (Banxico), by the end of 2030 pensions will be equivalent to 33.3% of GDP; without the reform, they would have reached 27.6% of GDP (Banxico, 2021). Banxico also estimates⁵⁵ that

the impact of this reform on public finances represents a slight fiscal cost in net present value (NPV) of 0.3% of 2020 GDP for the entire analysis period; however, between 2023 and 2045 a fiscal benefit of 4.6% of GDP would be observed, while from 2046 to 2100 there would be a fiscal cost of 5.0% of GDP (Banxico, 2021).

The increase in domestic savings has been a fundamental tool for maintaining fiscal balance in Mexico,

⁵⁵ The analysis period covers the years 2021 to 2100.

particularly in recent years when revenues barely grew. From December 2014 to December 2024, the Siefores increased their holdings of government securities from 17.2% to 25.3%, making them the principal institutional holder (surpassing banks) (Banxico, 2025). The trend suggests that domestic savings will very likely be the main engine of the country's development for at least the next two decades.

Domestic savings will have the capacity to finance large-scale projects, both public and private, in terms of amount and duration. However, this increase may prove to be a double-edged sword: either debt continues to be internalized within public finances, such as Pemex's debt, or policymakers opt to finance infrastructure projects that stimulate Mexico's economic growth. Nevertheless, the latter would require, once again, strengthening investment project evaluation (social ex-ante evaluation) and environmental protection institutions, which were seriously weakened under the previous federal administration, as well as reducing discretion, opacity and corruption in the allocation of public resources. As Banxico points out, domestic savings will generate benefits for a limited period and as of now (2025), the countdown is 20 years. In other words, it is necessary to strengthen the mechanisms for allocating resources within the

With the most recent pension reform of December 2020, the assets managed by Afores are expected to rise from 20% to 54% of GDP by 2040 (Serrano, C., July 22, 2025).

Mexican economy through social and environmental evaluation to ensure a return on investment and make it possible to begin repaying creditors (savers) within a 20-year horizon.

5 EFFECTS OF THE REFORM TO THE ISSSTE LAW: NEITHER FORGIVENESS NOR FORGETTING

The recent decree issued by the Federal Executive (Claudia Sheinbaum), which amends the Tenth Transitory Provision, Section II of the ISSSTE Law (Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado, or the Institute), will reduce the retirement age of state workers. By 2034, the retirement age for women and men in public service will be 53 and 55 years, respectively. Under the 2007 reform (in force until June 24, 2025), the retirement ages would have been 58 and 60 years, respectively. According to the explanatory statement issued by the federal government, the purpose of the latest reform is “... that public servants should not have to wait more years to access their fundamental right.”

At the close of 2024, there were 860,607 active pensions under the Tenth Transitory regime, accounting for 63.4% of the total (ISSSTE, 2025a). The remaining 36.6% consisted of individual accounts (65,349) and

the previous law (431,013) (ISSSTE, 2025a). Moreover, 85.3% of pensions under the Tenth Transitory regime corresponded to retirement, age and years of service and old-age pensions. The remaining 14.7% were made up of work risk and disability and life pensions. Two out of every three workers under this regime are concentrated in the central (43.6%) and southern regions (22.1% of the total) (ISSSTE, 2025a). Within these, the southern region presents the highest proportion of workers under this regime relative to the regional total (69.5%), while the central and northern regions show the lowest rates, 60.7% and 60.9%, respectively (ISSSTE, 2025a).

In 2024, pension and retirement payments amounted to 339.4 billion pesos⁵⁶, representing 69.9% of the ISSSTE's budget expenditure (485.8 billion pesos) (ISSSTE, 2025a). On the revenue side, the Institute collected (current and capital revenues) 113.8 billion pesos (ISSSTE, 2025a). The deficit was covered by transfers from Budgetary Branch XIX for pension payments, amounting to 387.2 billion pesos. Of these

⁵⁶ Chapter 4500 Pensions and Retirements indicates that the ISSSTE exercised 343 million pesos, the same amount that is made up of the Payment of Pensions and Retirements, Payment of Insured Sums and Economic Benefits other than Pensions and Retirements. These last two concepts added up to 3.6 billion pesos.

transfers, 339.2 billion pesos were allocated to cover the pension deficit (ISSSTE, 2025a). In other words, the federal government, through the Federal Expenditure Budget, had to subsidize 99.9% of ISSSTE pensions. For their part, workers' contributions only provided 35.1 billion pesos (7% of total revenues, or 30.9% excluding federal transfers). These contributions were almost evenly divided between the Benefits Fund (17.2 billion pesos) and medical services (17.9 billion pesos) (ISSSTE, 2025a).

Thus, the pensions-to-contributions ratio is 9.7 to 1. For every peso contributed by active workers, ISSSTE must pay 9 pesos and 70 cents in pensions. The underlying issue is that the ratio of active workers to retirees has been declining for decades. According to Pedro Vazquez,

when ISSSTE was created, there were 20 active workers contributing for every retiree; by 2006, there were 5.3 workers per retiree and currently there is less than one worker per retiree (Diaz, S., June 4, 2025).

The Institute itself

... expects that in the coming years the number of retirees will gradually increase, reaching a maximum exceeding 2.2 million retirees after 2055,

which represents around 800,000 additional retirees to the current 1.38 million.

It also estimates that pensions under the Tenth Transitory regime will grow steadily over the next 13 years, peaking at more than one million retirees by 2037 (ISSSTE, 2025b). That figure will subsequently decline.

With the reform to the Tenth Transitory provision, there will be a reduction in the average retirement age, with workers leaving the labor market five years earlier than expected. At the same time, this reduction will converge with an increase in life expectancy, projected to rise from 75.5 to 77 years between 2024 and 2030, particularly among women, thereby putting upward pressure on pension costs. With this measure, the Mexican state will have to pay pensions for approximately 25 years per worker. According to Carlos Ramirez, starting in 2030, the reduction in the minimum retirement age will represent an additional fiscal cost of 30 to 40 billion pesos per year. "In total, this would amount to 400 billion pesos over time in present value terms" (Diaz, S., June 23, 2025).

From the perspective of workforce renewal and the economies of unions and organizations such as the CNTE (Coordinadora Nacional de los Trabajadores

With the reform to the Tenth Transitory provision, there will be a reduction in the average retirement age, with workers leaving the labor market five years earlier than expected. This reduction will converge with an increase in life expectancy from 75.5 to 77 years between 2024 and 2030, thereby putting upward pressure on pension costs.

de la Educacion), this reform will accelerate turnover within the public administration, allowing older employees to be replaced by younger ones more quickly than in the past decade. This does not mean an expansion of labor demand in the public sector, since the number of positions will remain the same, but it will strengthen unions by providing jobs for younger workers and a source of livelihood for adults (not necessarily elderly). It will energize the labor market and likely ease bottlenecks caused by the aging workforce.

However, this measure also carries the risk of discouraging individuals from maximizing their capacities and of reinforcing union structures in the country's poorer regions. A greater number of women will be able to benefit from this policy, largely depending on the university careers they continue to choose. At the close of 2024, there were 1.834 million women (56.2% of the total) affiliated with ISSSTE (ISSSTE, 2025a). During the 2023–2024 academic year, there were 29,171 graduates from Normal Education programs, of whom 21,892 were women (75%) (ANUIES, 2024). This mechanism will produce harmful effects in a constantly changing labor market. The reform will create incentives to join the state workforce, send misleading signals to the labor market (to job

seekers) and increase rigidity in both the educational market (through repeated career choices) and the labor market in the south, particularly in the southeast. The measure broadens access to a right (social security), but it does not reduce inequalities.

The impact on the labor market in the medium and long term remains uncertain. For now, it is unknown whether the new generations of retirees, being increasingly younger, will remain in the labor market or will move into the Economically Inactive Population (outside the labor force), as has occurred with beneficiaries of the Older Adults Pension Program. That is, whether they will continue working in informality and most likely outside the public sector. If so, the cost of the measure should be analyzed alongside the increase in current income for these workers (as retirees) and whether such income ultimately compensates for the fiscal cost of the measure.

In conclusion, the group of older adults aged 60 and over in Mexico faces multiple challenges affecting their social mobility and prosperity, despite certain advances in social program coverage. Access to pensions and government support has grown significantly, with 86.5% of older adults receiving some form of assistance in 2025. As a result, withdrawal

from the labor market has become widespread, especially in more prosperous regions, leading to a higher dependency ratio of older populations relative to the workforce. In this context, non-contributory pensions have gained prominence but have so far exhibited regressive distribution, favoring higher-income sectors. Moreover, older women are in an economically vulnerable position due to their low labor force participation throughout their lives and gender inequalities in caregiving. Barriers to accessing health services also persist, compounded by social deprivations such as lack of medical care and the continued prevalence of poverty among older adults, with 23.6% living in poverty in 2024.

Recent reforms, such as the reduction of the retirement age for state workers, while potentially energizing the labor market, also pose risks by increasing fiscal costs and potentially fragmenting the pension system, without guaranteeing genuine economic empowerment for all older adults, especially women and the most vulnerable populations. In summary, although social policies have improved the situation of older adults, persistent challenges in equitable access to resources, health and economic participation reflect a structural vulnerability that limits their social mobility and long-term well-being.

The group of older adults aged 60 and over in Mexico faces multiple challenges affecting their social mobility and prosperity, despite certain advances in social program coverage.



8 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

<https://www.trenvista.net/encarrilando/cuando-un-tren-espera-otro-cruces/>

8 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

From the systematic analysis presented in this Signos Vitales report emerges a structurally adverse diagnosis for social mobility and prosperity in Mexico. The national economy has shown insufficient performance to become an engine of well-being. Average growth between 2018 and 2024 was only 0.86%, the lowest in more than 35 years and future prospects are not promising. This will limit the creation of opportunities at a general level. Despite the increase in public spending and the reduction of poverty according to INEGI, much of the investment has been concentrated in infrastructure that does not translate into improvements in health, education, or working conditions.

In 2024, 32.5% of the population is not in poverty or vulnerability. The remaining 67.5% either lives in poverty (29.6%), is vulnerable due to social deprivations (32.2%), or is vulnerable due to income (5.8%). While there has been a reduction in poverty of 6.7 percentage points in 2024 compared to 2022, this reduction is greater for moderate poverty (5.1 pp) than for extreme poverty (1.8 pp). For this reason, a broad social approach that “puts the poor first” would have a greater effect on extreme poverty (the poorest of the poor) than on moderate poverty.

Moreover, the report provides evidence that while household incomes have risen to reduce income

poverty⁵⁷, fundamental rights are not guaranteed for broad segments of the population. In 2024, more than 62 million lack social security, 44.5 million do not have access to health services and the justice system shows a 99% impunity rate. Informality affects more than 50% of the labor force, with direct consequences on access to social protection, stability and decent pensions. Added to this is structural violence, which not only affects young people and those of productive age most directly but also undermines the right to life and geographically stable family trajectories, dissolves social cohesion and erodes trust in institutions. For its part, the educational system shows serious vulnerabilities to the extent that it has diminished its capacity to be a channel for social advancement, since learning trajectories affect the poor population more. The pandemic left lasting damage that was not corrected.

The collapse of these engines is not accidental. The report documents a continuous process of institutional weakening, recentralization of power and the elimination of technical counterweights, especially

⁵⁷ Reduction of 8.1 pp for the population with income below the income poverty line in 2024 compared to the previous measurement (2022). The reduction for the population with income below the extreme income poverty line was smaller (2.8 pp) (INEGI, 2025k).

the independence of the judiciary and the institutions that guarantee citizens' basic democratic rights. This institutional weakness and deficient rule of law obstruct the effectiveness of the engines of social mobility. Public spending has grown without results to justify it and the state apparatus has ceased to articulate a rights-based public policy. The state has reproduced trajectories of exclusion through a welfare-oriented, clientelist and low-effectiveness scheme. Social mobility, far from being a reasonable expectation, has become a statistical exception.

One of the main strengths of this report lies in its generational approach, structured around six age groups. This perspective makes it possible to understand inequality of opportunities and socioeconomic conditions not as a static snapshot, but as a cumulative trajectory. By observing social mobility through a life-cycle perspective—from early childhood to old age—it is possible to identify precisely the circumstances under which the state has failed to guarantee development opportunities and therefore where public policy has the greatest areas of opportunity. This methodology reveals that exclusion is not a sudden or isolated phenomenon, but the result of repeated political decisions that affect specific stages of people's lives with long-term consequences.

Furthermore, the generational approach helps qualify the narrative of individual merit as a sufficient engine of upward mobility. With evidence from CEEY, the report reiterates that variables such as parents' educational attainment, place of birth, gender and ethnic background strongly condition access to rights. Poverty in childhood not only persists into adolescence but also highly determines opportunities in youth and adulthood. Beyond that, this report shows that in a country with high levels of violence and a weak rule of law, other key factors explain the low social mobility in Mexico. Insecurity affects people's development opportunities and, in extreme cases, cuts short lives altogether. Violence inside and outside the home forces the displacement of entire families or compels them to face extortion and other forms of violence that prevent productive development. This analytical framework demonstrates that individual effort is not sufficient to overcome initial conditions (family, socioeconomic and even geographic origin), but that additional accumulated deprivations also play a role when the state fails to act effectively.

The report's approach allows for an easy transition from diagnosis to proposal. By making visible the turning points in each age group, it opens possibilities for redesigning public policies with greater pre-

**GENERATIONAL APPROACH OF THE REPORT
STRUCTURED AROUND SIX AGE GROUPS:**

**SHOWS THAT VARIABLES SUCH AS PARENTS'
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STRONGLY CONDITION ACCESS TO RIGHTS.**

**THE APPROACH ALLOWS FOR AN EASY
TRANSITION FROM DIAGNOSIS TO
PROPOSAL.**

cision, relevance and impact. For example, investing in early childhood development, universalizing upper secondary education, creating a national care system, articulating decent jobs and guaranteeing sufficient pensions are clear courses of action identified in the analysis. This type of reading allows not only for problem identification but also for the construction of solutions based on evidence and urgency.

The approach of the report allows you to move from diagnosis to proposal with ease. By making the turning points visible in each age group, possibilities open up to re-design public policies with greater precision, relevance and impact. For example, investing in early childhood development, emphasizing the quality of education, creating a national care system, creating decent jobs and guaranteeing sufficient pensions are action routes identifiable in the analysis. This type of reading allows not only to highlight the problem, but also to build solutions based on evidence and urgency:

STRUCTURAL PRECONDITIONS

The report demonstrates that the country does not have solid foundations to guarantee social mobility. The lack of sustained growth, territorial inequality,

the debt increase without redistributive counterbalance and the capture of the judicial apparatus are elements that undermine any expectation of upward mobility. The weakening of autonomous bodies and the closure of technical evaluation spaces represent an institutional setback of great proportions. The rule of law is absent: Mexico ranks 118 out of 142 countries in the global justice index. The 99% impunity rate and the recent proposal for the popular election of judges confirm that the aim is not to strengthen justice, but to control its operation politically. The deterioration of the state's technical capacities has left millions without any guarantee of access to universal rights. Social mobility is impossible without a functional institutional foundation.

STRUCTURAL PRECONDITIONS

ELEMENTS THAT UNDERMINE ANY EXPECTATION OF UPWARD MOBILITY:

- » LACK OF SUSTAINED GROWTH
- » TERRITORIAL INEQUALITY
- » DEBT INCREASE
- » CAPTURE OF THE JUDICIAL APPARATUS.

EARLY CHILDHOOD (0–5 YEARS)

41.9% of children under six live in poverty, 37.7% lack access to health services and chronic malnutrition affects 12.8%. Only 10.2% have access to early education, implying a structural omission by the State in the most decisive stage for human development. Anemia affects 11.9% at the national level and more than 23% in rural areas. This negligence has permanent effects on life trajectories.

The report shows that there is no national early childhood development system nor a comprehensive strategy to reverse these indicators, with significant shortages in vaccines and other prevention programs. The absence of legal identity, family environments without institutional support and lack of early stimulation perpetuate the intergenerational transmission of poverty. This is the stage with the highest social return and the lowest public investment.

EARLY CHILDHOOD (0–5 YEARS)

STRUCTURAL OMISSION BY THE STATE IN THE MOST DECISIVE STAGE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

THERE IS NO NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

SHORTAGES IN VACCINES AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS

ABSENCE OF LEGAL IDENTITY, FAMILY ENVIRONMENTS WITHOUT INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND LACK OF EARLY STIMULATION PERPETUATE THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF POVERTY.

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE (6–15 YEARS)

Almost 39.3% of children between 6 and 11 years old and 36% of adolescents between 12 and 17 years old live in poverty; one in five works and it is the stage where school trajectories are cut short by various factors such as violence, teenage pregnancies and silent desertion. Only one in three achieves satisfactory learning in reading and mathematics. The educational system presents a deep structural crisis, such as the lack of care in the basic learning that Article 3 of the Constitution itself provides, materials disconnected from reality, schools without essential services and lack of emotional support. The disarticulation between educational levels has normalized the loss of entire generations. Adolescence is the stage where the opportunity for an upward trajectory is definitively lost.

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE (6–15 YEARS)

THE DISARTICULATION BETWEEN
EDUCATIONAL LEVELS HAS NORMALIZED THE
LOSS OF ENTIRE GENERATIONS

ADOLESCENCE IS THE STAGE WHERE THE OP-
PORTUNITY FOR AN UPWARD TRAJECTORY IS
DEFINITELY LOST.

YOUTH (15–29 YEARS)

More than 15.6 million young people live in poverty or exclusion. About 4.9 million do not study or work and 3.1 million study in conditions of poverty. Informality dominates their labor insertion and unemployment is combined with anxiety, frustration and violence. The disappearance of young people has reached alarming levels: more than 13,800 in 2024 alone. One in every 4 deaths in this age range is due to homicides. The demographic bonus has been wasted. The lack of mental health policies, youth employment, protection against organized crime and attractive educational offers for young people linked to the market, has led millions to migrate, join crime or live trapped in cycles of precariousness. This stage represents one of the biggest failures of the current model.

YOUTH (15–29 YEARS)

THE LACK OF MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES,
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, PROTECTION AGAINST
ORGANIZED CRIME AND ATTRACTIVE
EDUCATIONAL OFFERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
LINKED TO THE MARKET, HAS LED MILLIONS
TO MIGRATE, JOIN CRIME OR LIVE TRAPPED
IN CYCLES OF PRECARIOUSNESS.

ADULTHOOD (30–59 YEARS)

Adulthood should represent stability, but in Mexico it is marked by insecurity, care burdens and labor precariousness. While incomes have increased, essentially due to work, remittances and social programs, future improvement prospects depend on the economy's effectiveness in generating better-paid jobs with social protection. Fifty percent of women are outside the labor market due to unpaid care responsibilities. Violence, lack of housing and the inability to accumulate assets limit the well-being of this group. Rising informality and public disinvestment in health hinder access to pensions and general and specialized health services. The report reveals that this stage sustains both children and parents without institutional support and without guaranteed labor rights. Life expectancy has been reduced by violence and untreated chronic diseases. Adulthood reflects the exhaustion of the social protection system.

ADULTHOOD SHOULD REPRESENT STABILITY, BUT IN MEXICO IT IS MARKED BY INSECURITY, CARE BURDENS AND LABOR PRECARIOUSNESS.

THE REPORT REVEALS THAT THIS STAGE SUSTAINS BOTH CHILDREN AND PARENTS WITHOUT INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND WITHOUT GUARANTEED LABOR RIGHTS. LIFE EXPECTANCY HAS BEEN REDUCED BY VIOLENCE AND UNTREATED CHRONIC DISEASES

OLDER ADULTS (65 YEARS AND OLDER)

23.6% live in poverty and one in three is vulnerable due to social deprivations. The significant increase in the amount and coverage of the universal pension has improved living conditions for this group and allowed the vast majority to leave the labor market, presumably because they now have a minimum income. Although 86.5% receive a pension, it is not always sufficient and the poorest older adults are still not fully reached. Older women face higher levels of exclusion due to labor histories tied to unpaid care and outside contributory schemes. The health system is not prepared for aging. There is a shortage of geriatric doctors, infrastructure and a national care system. Public policy for this group has focused on transfers without an integral approach. Old age in Mexico confirms the state's structural abandonment of those who no longer produce and the coming decades of demographic aging raise red flags.

THE SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT AND COVERAGE OF THE UNIVERSAL PENSION HAS IMPROVED LIVING CONDITIONS FOR THIS GROUP AND ALLOWED THE VAST MAJORITY TO LEAVE THE LABOR MARKET.

THE HEALTH SYSTEM IS NOT PREPARED FOR AGING. THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF GERIATRIC DOCTORS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND A NATIONAL CARE SYSTEM. PUBLIC POLICY FOR THIS GROUP HAS FOCUSED ON TRANSFERS WITHOUT AN INTEGRAL APPROACH.

INSTITUTIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

This report makes it clear that the continuity of the current model threatens social cohesion and the intergenerational contract. In the short term, the priority must be to recover lost state capacities: restore health and education systems as universal rights, strengthen autonomous and technical bodies and establish a progressive fiscal policy to finance a genuine social protection network. The elimination of Seguro Popular, INEE and Coneval, for example, shows that the country has dismantled the institutions that allow the identification, correction and improvement of social policy.

In the medium term, Mexico needs a structural redesign of its welfare system with a life-cycle approach. It is necessary to build a national care system that enables women's economic inclusion, reconfigure education policies to generate useful and democratic learning and establish a national strategy for dignified aging. This requires abandoning the fragmented, electoralist, and welfare-oriented model and replacing it with a state policy with a long-term vision centered on rights and sustainability. The challenge is not technical but political. Solutions exist and have

been identified in multiple diagnoses, including this report. What is lacking is the will for change and leadership that prioritizes well-being over electoral gain. Mexico is at a turning point: it can rebuild its engines of social mobility or resign itself to living in a regime of perpetual inequality. The cost of inaction will be borne by today's children, youth and adults living in conditions of structural precariousness.

This report leaves no room for ambiguity: social mobility in Mexico has not only stalled, but its engines are severely weakened. The persistence of poverty, despite progress, is not circumstantial or the result of individual decisions but the product of an institutional structure that excludes, penalizes vulnerability and reduces rather than expands opportunities. The state apparatus has ceased to protect the majority and has failed to guarantee minimum conditions for well-being. Each age group analyzed confirms that the engines of social mobility are fragmented, weakened, or absent. The country lacks a care system, justice does not reach victims, the education system does not form citizens with critical capacity or tools to progress and health has become a geographic and economic lottery. Public policy does not respond to life trajectories but to immediate political gain.

In light of this evidence, the key questions are unavoidable: Is the Mexican state willing to recover its role as guarantor of rights? Will it be possible to rebuild a public policy that prioritizes equity over political loyalty? Can citizens demand forcefully and clearly a profound transformation before deterioration becomes irreversible? This report offers technical answers and hard evidence. What is missing is political will, citizen mobilization and a new social pact. Time is limited and responsibility is shared.

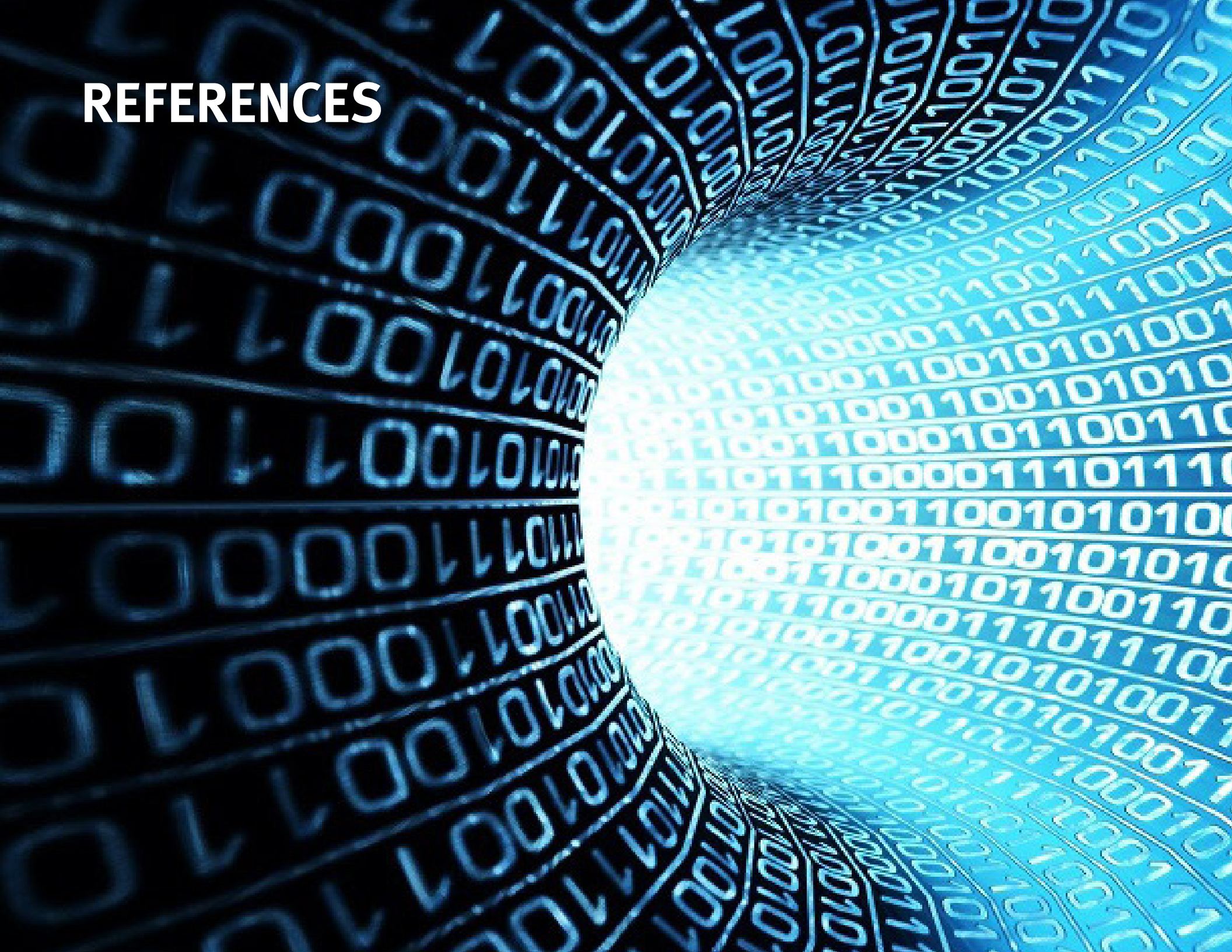
In light of the findings presented, it is imperative to underscore that the deterioration of the engines of social mobility and prosperity in Mexico does not constitute a mere systemic anomaly but a structural manifestation of the failure of public policies oriented toward equitable well-being. In this context,

institutional omission is not neutral; it reproduces and deepens conditions of exclusion, generates intergenerational costs and compromises the very viability of the democratic social contract. It is therefore urgent to design a new social protection model with a life-cycle approach, progressive financing and robust state stewardship, capable of guaranteeing universal access to health, education, care and justice. Without a comprehensive reconfiguration of the state oriented toward equity, Mexico will not only ensure social regression but also aggravate its territorial fragmentation, institutional distrust and structural weakness in the face of the future. Social mobility can no longer remain a random privilege. It must be a guaranteed right by design.

¿Is the Mexican state willing to recover its role as guarantor of rights? Will it be possible to rebuild a public policy that prioritizes equity over political loyalty? Can citizens demand forcefully and clearly a profound transformation before deterioration becomes irreversible?



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