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**YOUTH, POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARIBBEAN**

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**Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, CEPAL**  
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**YOUTH, POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARIBBEAN**



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This reference document is a preliminary version of a forthcoming publication that will bear the same title and will include the contents of working document LC/G.2084(SES.28/16) as its first chapter.

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## INTRODUCTION

The young people of Latin America and the Caribbean are faced with the enormous challenge of directing an economic and social development process that will, at one and the same time, reduce poverty and the dismally high indices of socioeconomic inequality that threaten stability and harmonious coexistence in the region; promote a form of economic growth that will be sustainable over the long term and will allow the region to participate in the world economy on a competitive basis; and improve the quality of life in the countries of the region.

This objective is certainly a difficult one, and, in fact, it has eluded the generations that have gone before. However, the young people of today have a number of advantages that may help them make it a reality. They are more highly educated than their parents, they are knowledgeable about and know how to use the new technologies being applied in production, communications and information management and processing which will be key to the future performance of nations and individuals; they have experienced for themselves the unrelenting pace of change, which will enable them to deal with future changes more flexibly and rapidly; and they will be working within a set of demographic conditions that may afford them more manoeuvring room, both because of the trend towards the stabilization of young cohorts and because of the greater number of options available for the control of demographic behaviours.

Most of the available empirical evidence contradicts the encouraging conclusions to which the above line of reasoning leads, however, since a large —and perhaps even rising— number of young people continue to be excluded from full participation in society (as is clearly demonstrated by youth unemployment rates), the chances of young people engaging in high-risk forms of conduct (especially in terms of sexuality and reproductive functions) or illegal, violent, escapist or anti-social behaviour are just as great or even greater than they were before, and there is no sign that they are becoming more actively involved in decision-making.

This report has been prepared in fulfilment of a mandate received by the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) - Population Division of ECLAC from the countries of the region during the twenty-seventh session of the Commission, held in Aruba in 1998. The study presents a discussion and analysis of two opposing elements —the potential advantages of young people and the very real difficulties they face— with special emphasis on the importance of the implications that sociodemographic decision-making relating to such aspects as migration, sexual conduct, marriage and reproduction have for young people's options with respect to social mobility, the accumulation of assets and skills acquisition. It also focuses on the role of public policies concerning the young population and explores the obstacles hindering their design and implementation; the relevance of ensuring the involvement of various social agents, particularly young people themselves, in policy-making, implementation and evaluation; and the need for concerted action at the sectoral level in order to permit the adoption of joint measures of a cross-disciplinary nature.

This version of the document is a preliminary one which is to be reviewed by the countries' representatives at the twenty-eighth session of ECLAC. The comments, observations and doubts that emerge from the discussion of its contents at that forum will be incorporated into the text of a book to be distributed in the region in the course of the year. That publication will also include the latest version of the working document prepared for the twenty-eighth session of ECLAC entitled *Youth, population and development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Summary and conclusions*.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided a great deal of support and assistance for the preparation of this report. In addition to supplying the necessary funding to permit the formation of a high-level team to work on this study, UNFPA also made substantive and methodological contributions to the document and made professional staff on its Technical Support Team for Latin America and the Caribbean available for direct collaboration in its preparation.

## **I. ELEMENTS OF A CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The issue of youth has been analysed from very different theoretical and methodological perspectives based on contributions from highly diverse academic disciplines. Although most studies have focused on industrialized countries (Levi and Schmitt, 1996; Mauger, Bendit and Von Wolffersdorff, 1994; CCE, 1991), there has been a significant growth in studies of Latin America and the Caribbean (Rodríguez and Dabezies, 1991; Ottone and Rodríguez, 1989). This is particularly the case in some countries that have been prominent in analytical output on the issue: Chile, Mexico and Uruguay in the 1980s, and Argentina, Colombia and Mexico in the last decade.

Before addressing the central issues of this report, it is worth providing a brief synopsis of its main approaches, with particular emphasis on the various connections between youth and society. This first part thus schematically reviews the boundaries of youth, the main analytical approaches, the roles and functions inherent in youth, the various current youth sectors, the main agents of socialization, the conduct of youths as social and political actors, their difficulties in attaining easy and effective social integration and, finally, the link between youth and public policies in the region.

### **A. THE BOUNDARIES OF YOUTH**

In its most general sense, the term “youth” refers to the period of life through which individuals pass from childhood to adulthood, and during which important biological, psychological, social and cultural changes occur.

A cursory review of the literature on the issue confirms that there is broad agreement on the fact that the characteristics and scope of these changes vary according to society, culture, ethnicity, social class and gender. But there is also widespread appreciation of the practical need to establish some necessarily arbitrary convention that enables a comparison to be made between the situation of young people in different contexts, and to monitor their development over time. For many reasons, the simplest and intuitively the most appropriate criterion for identifying youths is age. Its advantages are evident: measuring it prompts no great problems of reliability, and it figures as a variable in the vast bulk of available sources that periodically compile data.

The agreement on the need to establish a common operational definition, and to take age as the main criterion, prompts the question of what age limits are the most appropriate for capturing the essence of youth. Despite the diversity of approaches, there is little disagreement on the lower limit that operationally defines young people. Indeed, in establishing the age at which a child becomes a youth, there is a fair degree of consensus on giving priority to criteria derived from a biological and psychological approach, on the grounds that the development of sexual and reproductive functions represents a profound change in physical, biological and psychological development that clearly distinguishes adolescents from children. Efforts to establish the upper age limit, by contrast, prompt doubts that bring into question the practical advantages of using age as the main criterion of the operational definition. An examination of the difficulties involved in establishing these limits casts light on and demands explicit clarification of the criteria through which the various approaches compete, and is also a good starting point for analysing the factors that blur the boundaries of youth.

A first step in this examination involves recognizing that the domain of youth is expanding. As societies have developed from rural to urban, from agricultural to industrial and from industrial to the present knowledge-based society, the period of youth has lengthened, and today it is assuming proportions unprecedented in human history. Such changes affect not only the minds of young people but also their physiology (as evidenced by changes in the age of menstruation), their habits and behaviour, the patterns of their relationships (between each other and with the rest of society), the ways they respond to the dominant culture and produce alternative cultural models, their significance as producers and consumers, and their view of politics and of political participation.

A second consideration, which brings its own measure of ambiguity to the definition of the boundaries of youth, consists of interdisciplinary disputes. Recent decades have witnessed a growth in the interest of various disciplines —such as biology, psychology, sociology, political science and anthropology— in developing their own speciality in the youth field. This might stem from a purely academic interest in tackling a relatively new field whose complexity and richness pose numerous conceptual and methodological challenges. But undoubtedly the main allure of youth for these disciplines is its growing influence on the economy, culture and society. Another, equally important incentive arises from the fact that the youth issue conflates at least two problems that have assumed priority in the concerns of public opinion and on the public policy agendas of the Governments of the region: unemployment and public safety.

A third factor is the loss of consistency of the whole status set that constituted nodes for identification in the adult world. In the past, entry to adulthood implied the temporal confluence of economic, social, cultural and political conduct that converged around well-established patterns of behaviour. From that perspective, the adult model consisted of a set of mutually consistent forms of conduct whose core was located in work and family roles. The values and norms that regulated conduct in those spheres were supplemented and strengthened by those stemming from other fundamental institutions, such as the church and the community.

Currently, at least three processes are modifying the nature and characteristics of adult roles: (i) they are less central to economic and cultural output; (ii) they are less consistent among themselves, in as much as there is an increase in the number of people who simultaneously assume typically adult and typically juvenile roles and, (iii) their meaning becomes less clear with changes in the make-up of families and in labour market participation.

The central nature of adult roles is being affected by some emerging features of the ways in which modern societies work. Some elements of youth culture are starting to compete advantageously with elements of adult culture as guides to the habits and conduct of the population at large. Such advantages are clear, to the extent that the institutionalization of change (the core process of modern times) places a higher value on the capacity to face new circumstances flexibly and to incorporate innovations quickly. The growing demand for such capacities means, among other things, that adults look to young people for guidance on the appropriate attitudes to adopt in the face of change, all of which tends to move the axis of cultural production toward youth.

The traditional consistency among adult roles is being affected by a greater mismatch between the adoption of roles in different spheres. A growing number of people are thus participating fully in the workforce, but they fall short of their adult obligations towards family and community. The disengagement between productive roles and adult culture partially stems from the growing significance of the youth market, whose goods and services are to a large extent provided primarily by other young people.



Finally, the meaning of adult roles whose crux was the assumption of responsibilities at home and at work is also being altered by changes in production and in the family. The precariousness and uncertainty of employment, as well as the weakening of labour institutions, affect the traditional centrality of work as an axis of identity formation, and thus make the adult role more ambiguous. A similar effect derives from the breakdown of the traditional family and the emergence of new models of home-building, characterized by the non-formalization of the union and by the greater relative weight of unstable and incomplete households.

Recognition of the increasingly blurred nature of the boundaries between young people and adults is a sharp warning of the need for caution in the face of any temptation to alter the age limits that have normally distinguished the categories.

## **B. MAIN ANALYTICAL APPROACHES**

In the past the traditionally predominant focuses of attention in studies on youth in the region have been demographic considerations and biological and psychological approaches. In the last two decades, however, sociological and political science approaches have increasingly been adopted, as have cultural and anthropological perspectives. This report cannot address each of these perspectives in depth, but it is important at least to outline their essential characteristics and to identify their main contributions to the development of knowledge of youth.

From the demographic viewpoint, young people are above all a population group of a particular age. This varies according to the specific context, but it is generally seen as the period between 15 and 24. In the countryside or in circumstances of severe poverty, this is expanded to include those between 10 and 14. In various contexts among the urban middle and upper sectors, it is extended to those between 25 and 29. From this perspective, the young —depending on various particular circumstances— can be identified as those aged between 10 and 29. Although such definitions are theoretically unsophisticated, they do allow very precise analyses to be undertaken from the quantitative angle and they can draw on various statistical sources (surveys, censuses and others).

Additionally from a demographic perspective, the study of the various population groups allows rigorous approaches to crucial problems of the development of all human beings, such as trends in fertility, mortality and migration that progress in different ways according to individuals' degree of development. In the case of young people —as will be seen in detail below— fertility is the highest in the whole life cycle, while mortality has very specific causes (traffic accidents, for example) and migration is intensifying markedly, prompted by the search for better personal and social development conditions.

Notwithstanding the arbitrariness of all statistical definitions, it can be said that, in the case of studies of youth, the age period chosen has adequate substantive bases, to the extent that entering and leaving this stage of life coincide with very particular processes. The lower boundary of the chosen period covers the age in which sexual and reproductive functions are already developed, which clearly distinguishes youth from childhood and has significant repercussions for physical, biological and psychological development. All the above exceptions having been made, the upper age limit is identified as the point when individuals, in various specific circumstances and at a varying pace in each particular

sphere, reach the end of the formal educational cycle and face entry into the labour market and the setting up of their own homes. At that point they are classified as adults.

By virtue of such processes, and from the biological and psychological viewpoints, the youth of any person may be defined as the period that lasts from the achievement of physiological maturity to the achievement of social maturity. But not all people of the same age pass through this stage of life in the same way, nor do they attain their goals at the same time; sociologists and political scientists have thus insisted on the need to include other variables in the analysis of youth. It has been eloquently demonstrated that youth has very different meanings for people belonging to each specific social sector (men and women, poor and non-poor, rural and urban dwellers, among others) and that youth is experienced in very different ways according to the circumstances in which people grow and mature (societies that are democratic or authoritarian, traditional or modern, agricultural or industrialized, lay or religious, or others).

Recent studies have gone further in adopting approaches derived from anthropology and other similar disciplines, with the aim of demonstrating the existence of true youth cultures (which in some specific stages and contexts became subcultures that posed no challenge to the dominant cultures, but in other cases were authentic countercultures that did pose such challenges). Such approaches place special stress on the problems of youth identity as a key to characterizing young people as a social group (Feixa, 1998; Arias, 1998; Marafioti, 1996; Margulis, 1996). From this perspective, an effort has been made to demonstrate the existence of youth groups with common characteristics, beyond the differences between their members in terms of social class, that are increasingly influenced by mass culture and that cohere around cultural phenomena such as rock music and similar expressions of youth (Gándara, Mangone and Warley, 1997; Levis, 1997; Rodríguez, 1995; Urteaga, 1998).

Each of the diverse but complementary approaches has made a significant contribution to the analysis of the young. The research findings have allowed speculation in this field to be replaced by profuse empirical evidence to support or refute the wide variety of value judgements made from many angles in the countries of the region during recent decades: the myth of young people as standard bearers of revolutionary change, for example. However, few studies have managed to link these various approaches from a holistic and integrated perspective.

### **C. ROLES AND FUNCTIONS INHERENT IN YOUTH**

What essential considerations, then, should feature prominently in an analysis that seeks to establish a characterization that is precise and helpful in designing and implementing public policies towards youth? One of the most important is the kind of roles and functions that young people should fulfil in the society in which they live. There are at least four crucial defining elements in this regard: (i) the attainment of adulthood as a main goal; (ii) emancipation and autonomy as a means to the end; (iii) the construction of a personal identity as a central issue and, (iv) intergenerational relations as a basic framework for the attainment of such goals.

It seems clear that reaching adulthood is the main goal, and that the passage from childhood to adulthood that all young people must experience should be undertaken in the best possible way. The youth is no longer a child but is not yet an adult, and no matter how much the period of youth is stretched out over time —staying longer in the educational system, deferring entry into the labour market and postponing the establishment of new homes— it is inevitable that young people become adults. By

definition, youth is transitory and is lost very quickly with the passing of the years (even differences between young people of different ages are evident).

In that context, emancipation becomes the crux of a young person's passage from total dependence on parents and guardians in childhood to the full autonomy of adulthood. This passage will face many complex challenges —characteristic of the ongoing change in roles— that will substantially hamper the formation of a personal identity (one not constructed by parents or guardians, as happens with children) and that is undoubtedly the core issue of this process.

As has been argued in several ECLAC studies, “on the one hand, the very nature of the transition supposes the existence of a continuous process of change in roles; on the other, such changes pose the risk that the identities constructed might be undermined. In other words, the individual is subject to a particular tension: he or she must change, but at the same time must continue to be the same. Otherwise, in the face of the decisions that must permanently be made in the emancipation process, he or she can be dragged in any direction” (Filgueira, 1998).

In that process, moreover, young people increasingly interact with the society in which they live. They do so in a manner that is almost always conflictive, especially with the preceding adult generations that are already integrated into the social dynamic and that have little willingness to facilitate the integration of younger generations in a context in which, paradoxically, the latter's inclusion is key to ensuring the biological and social reproduction of a society dominated by adults. A similar perspective confers particular relevance on generational conflicts, to the extent that they explain many of the tensions that permanently arise in our societies.

As is argued in the presentation of an interesting collection of recent studies on youth, “the constant tension *between the adult world and the world of young people* is an element of most current societies, although, as might be supposed, the characteristics of such conflict conform to particular structural conditions and are grounded in particular cultural contexts.” That tension, moreover, has many specific facets. Thus, “the institutional thinking that favours the adult world; official school curricula that disregard the knowledge that students acquire in their daily lives; and the rationale inherent in a market society that sees young people only as potential consumers collide —sometimes violently— with some new sensibilities, with ways of relating to, getting to know and experiencing the world, and of building a future, phenomena that typify the great majority of young people” (Cubides, Laberde and Valderrama (eds.), 1998).

The issue of generational conflicts has been analysed in a wide variety of contexts, and an effort has been made to subsume it in interpretative approaches as ingrained as they are erroneous (the view, for example, that all people are socialists in their youth and conservatives as adults). The empirical evidence, however, shows categorically that in all societies available resources are unevenly distributed among the different age groups. Primacy is given to economically active adults (towards whom almost all the relevant social policies are adopted), and senior citizens (by means of retirement pensions that are paid by the whole of society), to the detriment of children, adolescents and young people who face serious constraints in integrating themselves into their society in terms of employment, access to housing and basic health services.

#### D. THE VARIOUS CURRENT YOUTH SECTORS

It is clear from many of the comments made above that youth as such does not exist. Rather, there are many diverse youth sectors or groups, with particular and specific characteristics that distinguish them sharply from each other. The issue is as obvious as it is relevant, especially from the public policy perspective, since it is impossible to devise homogeneous and uniform policies for all youths. Instead, policies must adapt to such peculiarities and particularities. While there is no question that many special youth groups exist, at least four of them evidence features that clearly set them apart. These merit a schematic description.

One of the main segments of the youth population —the only one that was socially recognized until the 1970s —consists of university students. To a large extent these have traditionally been the prototype of youth, in as much as they have always fully met the substantial conditions to be recognized as such. For decades this was the only youth sector that participated, through student movements, as an actor on the social and political stage. Its essential characteristics have nevertheless varied with time and with the expansion and segmentation of the region's universities, and it is no longer seen as the only active youth sector (Angulo and Castro, 1990; Tedesco and Blumenthal (eds.), 1986).

At this same time, and especially since the 1970s and 1980s, Latin American and Caribbean countries have witnessed the social flare-up of the *other* youth sector —that is, urban popular youth who were denied access to mid-level and higher education and who lived in the large and growing marginal areas of the region's main cities. Wholly unlike their university counterparts, they began to organize on street corners and in gangs, adopted their own patterns of identification and engaged in various forms of violence as an expression of their rejection of that integrated society from which they were excluded (Martínez and Valenzuela, 1984). Their almost complete exclusion from the formal labour market is the clearest expression of their social marginalization at all levels, and their different methods of organization have afforded them substantial visibility and presence in the public arena.

Although they enjoyed certain privileges granted as public policy priorities in the 1940s and 1950s, rural youth has since lost its prominence and visibility by virtue of the expanding processes of urbanization and social modernization. In numerical terms, it is now a minority and even marginal sector in most countries of the region (Durstun, 1998a). The main characteristics of rural youth, moreover, have undergone a profound transformation. Young rural people are increasingly influenced by modern urban culture and by changes in the rural societies where they live (including productive restructuring, technical modernization and cultural transformation). They nevertheless retain particular characteristics of their own, such as those connected to their creative and constructive impulses. They also display a greater willingness to accept innovation and have higher educational levels than earlier generations. Such factors could help foster the modernization of the countryside in terms of the family, the community and production.

Lastly, one sector with very marked characteristics, subject to severe exclusion and seclusion (at home, in the local community, and elsewhere) but clearly tending towards social integration (a process that has been under way for two or three decades), consists of young women (Reicher Madeira, 1998; Quiterio, 1995; Carerra Lugo (ed.), 1995). These suffer a double social exclusion by age and gender (and even triple in the case of those from the impoverished popular sectors), lack their own identity in the youth and women's movements, and carry the burden of extremely conservative traditions in terms of their roles in the household and in society. They have won space, above all, by virtue of their growing

inclusion in education and work —although they remain in subordinate and discriminatory positions— and in a few cases have been the target of special public policies that seek to empower women and to raise their level of equality and social recognition in relation to men.

#### **E. YOUTH AND SOCIETY (I): MAIN AGENTS OF YOUTH SOCIALIZATION**

Young people are not isolated; they live in and interact permanently with the society to which they belong and are influenced by it in a variety of ways. Given their nature, these influences have traditionally been analysed from the viewpoint of youth socialization, which is understood as the process of transmitting norms, values and customs from adult society to the new generations as a means of ensuring biological and social reproduction. To develop these processes, our societies have established certain socializing agents, prominent among which are the family, school, peer groups and the media.

Traditionally, the core agent of youth socialization has been the family, which for a long time assumed functions that included basic education. With the passing of time, however, and in the context of the social modernization processes under way in all the countries of the region, formal education has absorbed some of these domestic educational functions. The latter, in turn, changed markedly, undermining the importance of stable and complete households, eroding the hegemony of the bread winner system in urban centres, and blurring the traditional gender divide between the public and domestic realms. This opened the way to a situation in which both partners in most households participate in the labour market (ECLAC, 1993 and 1994). Hence families lost their centrality in socialization processes and gave way to the ascendant influence of other socializing agents, particularly the educational system and the mass media. The socializing influences on younger generations have thus become increasingly complex.

Something similar happened —away from the family and from the educational system— with the emergence of the mass media, especially television. In the course of a few decades the media acquired a decisive influence on youth socialization, competing with families within the home and even with the formal educational system. The media devised methods and instruments that were much more attractive to young people, as well as values and norms that differed from and even contradicted those emanating from the family and from the formal educational system. Television has even influenced new generations' symbols of identity, appropriating and marketing hugely diverse expressions of youth that had arisen in small circles and raising the possibility that they could become dominant (Mier and Piccini, 1987; Gándara, Mangone and Warley, 1997; Rodríguez, 1995). The educational system has still not found a way of meeting this growing and challenging competition —to which the output of computer networks are swiftly being added— and has thus far been unable to include these media to any great degree in its daily routine, as instruments that have great potential to secure the system's goals.

Peer groups, for their part, have always played a decisive role in the socialization of young people and constitute one of the few —if not the only— real youth agents that are barely controlled by adults. It is hard to specify a single indication of their influence on the young since the very make-up of youth groups is extremely heterogeneous. In some cases (such as university students), such groups have taken leading roles on their countries' political and social stage within certain established rules. In other cases, participation has taken the form of anti-system outbursts (as is the case of youth from the popular urban sectors in various specific circumstances). In yet other cases, youth sectors have championed solidarity

(youth movements linked to churches, for example). Peer groups have often been increasingly influenced by the mass media, thus blurring their internal differences.

Finally, and although numerous specific references have already been made, it is important to highlight one of the main deficiencies of school, which has never functioned adequately as an agent of youth socialization beyond the mere transmission of formal knowledge. It is here that one of the main challenges of the future probably lies, since teenagers and young people generally spend a considerable part of their daily lives in educational establishments. The latter are thus key agents of youth socialization and important places in which to train new generations to develop their many complex interrelations with the mass media. School can also be a decisive instrument in the development of new and better formulas for family performance if it can devise and establish new bonds with students' families. This would undoubtedly have positive effects on children's learning.

## **F. YOUTH AND SOCIETY (II): YOUNG PEOPLE AS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTORS**

As well as absorbing a variety of influences from the society in which they live, young people seek to influence social circumstances by means of a broad array of strategies, be it by striving for social and political activism or by means of various forms of expression and identity that they endeavour to transmit to society as a whole. Throughout history, however, the desire of young people for participation has found expression in methods that are fundamentally transient, and periods of great activism and public visibility have alternated with other periods of inactivity and invisibility. The issue, which has been analysed in depth by several specialists, apparently evidences a structural phenomenon that is independent of the younger generations involved and of the time and place on which the analysis centres. The matter seems to be intimately connected to the transience of youth which, as mentioned above, is very quickly lost with the passing of the years. This has led some authors to argue that that, unlike workers or women (who are guided by the "material dimensions of their existence"), young people are guided by the "symbolic dimensions of their existence" (Martínez and Valenzuela, 1984).

Hence, while workers make their claims with the aim of improving their working conditions, and while women organize to safeguard the equality of rights and treatment in relation to men, young people are mobilized by peace, democracy, the protection of human rights, ecology and many other eminently good but unspecific causes that are only indirectly linked with youth itself. This is a substantial divide, since in taking this course young people can never be expected to organize themselves along corporate lines, which is a significant constraint in the context of societies that operate in corporate terms at all levels.

These reflections facilitate a more objective analysis of the polemical issue of real or alleged youth apathy (especially as regards political participation) in comparison to the supposed interest of earlier generations of young people, basically in the 1960s and 1970s. The available evidence indicates that young people are indeed markedly remote from the main public institutions (such as political parties, parliaments, the judiciary and the police), but it also shows that their views differ little from the equally critical perceptions of other sectors of the population (as evidenced, for example, by *Latinobarómetro* surveys). This suggests that the problem is connected to these institutions and their particular way of working rather than to anti-democratic attitudes.



In fact, all the indications are that real or alleged youth apathy stems from disaffection sparked by institutions whose working routines are substantially (and increasingly) more boring than spectacular in terms of innovation (a feature of the democracies being established throughout almost the whole region). This contrasts with the predominant thinking among young people, who want to see swift and profound changes in a broad range of social spheres. Hence, as a result of the crisis of "real" socialism, the end of military dictatorships and growing globalization, the possibilities for spectacular change (of the kind desired by young people) become more remote and less feasible by the day. This, coupled to corruption and similar practices that are severely criticized by young people, limits the attraction of these institutions for the young (Sidicaro and Tenti, (comp.), 1998; INJ, 1999; Morinigo, 1999). There is no doubt, however, that when young people perceive real possibilities to affect the course of events they participate with resolve. Colombian youth, for example, did so with respect to the National Constituent Assembly at the beginning of the 1990s, as did Paraguayan youth in the crisis of last March.

This is probably the reason for the marked proliferation of youth "tribes" in recent years, as outlets where young people feel more comfortable —among peers— amid social circumstances that they perceive as extremely hostile (Mafessoli, 1990). Although the thinking on these "tribes" has a marked European bent —or, more generally, is typical of highly industrialized societies— it is helpful for analysing some phenomena that are also apparent in Latin America and the Caribbean, albeit for different reasons. These phenomena include the resurgence of street corner groups, the emergence of football hooliganism and others, which have arisen in the context of accentuated residential segregation and an alarming decline in public safety.

From this perspective, the tribes are above all "the result of the countless tensions, contradictions and anxieties that weigh upon contemporary youth", and are hence seen as "a social and symbolic response to the excessive rationality of modern life, to the individualistic isolation that large cities impose, and to the indifference of an extremely competitive society. Adolescents and youths usually see the tribes as offering the chance of finding new means of expression, as a way of distancing themselves from a routine existence that fails to satisfy them and, above all, as a way of intensifying their personal experiences and of finding a gratifying core of emotion. This can be seen, from many perspectives, as a kind of emotional armour that offers protection against contemporary urban bleakness and that, paradoxically, leads them to the street" (Costa, Pérez and Tropea, 1996).

The issue is as complex as it is important, since at bottom it concerns the participation of young people in the society to which they belong, surely the master key to the whole youth issue and to public policies on youth. It could be argued that, while protection is the key word in policies toward children and equality is the key in policies toward women, the key word in youth policies is participation. However, two equally dangerous trends in these fields impose severe constraints on the expansion and deepening of such participation: first, the dominant sectors' fears that youth participation will exceed tolerable limits; and second, the tendency to idealize such participation as the solution to all current social problems. In fact, participation should be conceived within stricter limits and, at the same time, more ambitiously as another (but very important) instrument of the necessary apprenticeship that young people must undergo in order to attain their emancipation.

### **G. YOUTH AND SOCIETY (III): THE DIFFICULTIES OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION**

A third approach to the link between youth and society focuses on the difficulties involved in that social integration for which young people strive in their transition to adulthood, and which public policies try to facilitate through various initiatives. The issue can be tackled from many angles, but in this case it is important to underline four dimensions that are particularly critical: young people's access to education, work, healthcare and housing.

As regards education, all the available studies highlight the region's significant achievements in terms of coverage (universalization of primary schooling, substantial widening of secondary education and expansion of higher education), as well as the persistent deficiencies in almost all countries in terms of equality in and the quality of education (inadequate schooling that is divorced from reality, dropping out and removal from school, among others). The most recent studies of the Organization of American States (OAS) (1998), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (1998a), the World Bank (1996) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (Moura Castro and Carnoy, 1997) are very clear in this respect.

This combination is obviously explosive from the viewpoint of youth socialization, because on the one hand it raises young people's awareness of the opportunities and possibilities offered by society (a process reinforced by the internationalization of communications), while on the other hand it constrains their chances of exploiting those opportunities and possibilities in practice. Inevitably, the result is a profound sense of frustration that demotivates young people and prompts them to drop out of school, with an attendant weakening of the social integration process. Some recent research has nevertheless stressed that, at least in some particular contexts, school continues to be highly valued among poor youth, who view it as the border between exclusion and social integration (Duschatzky, 1999). This is closely related to the issue of young people's insertion into the labour market, since one of the main difficulties they face in this area is their lack of training, a circumstance directly related to the crisis in technical education and professional training. But the issue has many other worrying facets that stem from young people's lack of experience (which places them at a disadvantage to adults in competition for the available jobs), and from the fact that some are very selective (especially those who are highly educated) in seeking paid work in line with the training they received in the educational system (Pineda, 1999; Rodríguez, 1998).

Added to all this is the meagre interest of the main actors in the productive process —unions, entrepreneurs and governments— in integrating youth because of other priorities. The unions protect the interests of those workers who are already integrated; entrepreneurs prefer to hire more skilled and experienced adults; and governments give priority to participation in the labour market by adult breadwinners. Circumstances thus seem extremely difficult for young people. Exclusion from or uncertain integration in working life constitute another difficulty —perhaps the most serious because of its consequences in many other areas— that young people face in their efforts to integrate into society, especially for those from poor households (Konterllnik and Jacinto (eds.), 1996; Jacinto and Gallart (eds.), 1998; CINTERFOR-OIJ, 1998).

The other worrying aspect of the issue concerns health, an area in which the young face serious difficulties on several concurrent levels. Since young people become ill less often than children and older adults, public policies —which concentrate overwhelmingly on treating illnesses rather than on healthcare—usually neglect young people's particular problems. In fact, young people face many dangerous forms of conduct that should be addressed by policies on prevention and by the promotion of



healthy lifestyles. Traffic accidents, sexually transmitted diseases, the consumption of legal and illegal drugs, and early pregnancy among teenage girls are some of the main problems. However, in only a few countries and in certain spheres are there comprehensive responses consistent with the scope and complexity of such problems, taking reproductive health as a core issue and establishing the appropriate link between the various institutional interventions (PAHO, 1995; OIJ/UNFPA/PAHO, 1996; PAHO, 1998a).

Lastly, and directly related to the issue of emancipation and autonomy highlighted earlier, the young face serious difficulties in gaining access to housing of their own when they come to consider the possibility of forming new homes, independent from their parents (Filgueira, Amoroso and Fuentes, 1997). This reinforces two types of highly worrying behaviour on the part of young people: on the one hand, the establishment of new homes that do not become independent of the parental household (the new couple cohabits with the parents of one of its members); and, on the other, the increasing frequency of couples in temporary relationships that constantly break up and reform, which imbues the process with a clear sense of short-termism. The increase in the number of divorces, the relative decline in the number of marriages and the concomitant growth of consensual unions are the order of the day in most countries of the region.

Concern is also spurred by the accentuated trends towards residential segregation evident in most Latin American cities, whereby the various areas or neighbourhoods are inwardly homogenized and distinguish themselves sharply from other areas, thereby placing ever greater emphasis on profound social polarization. All the available studies show that the region has the most pronounced social inequalities in the world. This segregation constrains the possibilities for upward social mobility that heterogeneous neighbourhoods previously offered to the most vulnerable sectors, and accentuates the isolation increasingly felt by the region's young people, in particular. These trends cause, or at least nourish, the emergence and proliferation of those urban "tribes" mentioned earlier.

## **H. YOUTH AND PUBLIC POLICIES (I): APPROACHES, CONSTRAINTS AND TENSIONS**

The factors outlined here substantially condition the development of public policies concerned with youth. The issue has been the object of several, highly rigorous studies in various national contexts, the fruit of approaches grounded in contributions from the programmatic and institutional analysis applied to a broad range of fields. Some very useful lessons can be drawn from this research, with a view to reformulating such policies in the coming decade (Rodríguez, 1999a; CNPD, 1998; Bango (ed.), 1996a; Rodríguez, 1996).

One of the main problems concerns the constraints inherent in the separate sectoral responses that predominated throughout the entire twentieth century in public policies towards young people. Lacking a comprehensive and cogent vision, such responses concentrated on particular aspects of the youth field (such as education, employment and health) and neglected the broader picture, as we will see in greater detail below.

For several decades —especially between the 1940s and the 1970s— the predominant approach focused on education and leisure time. To a large extent, this approach worked quite smoothly in the context of dynamic economies and societies with effective mechanisms for upward social mobility, but it almost exclusively benefited integrated youth from the middle and upper sectors. Later, in the last decade

of 1980s, the limitations of that traditional model became evident in the context of economies in crisis and societies in which upward social mobility was frozen. Greater concern for excluded youth consequently arose, and work training and employment were the main spheres of public policy intervention. More recently, there has been a marked concern for the link between young people and violence (McAlister, 1998; Carrión, 1995; Rodríguez, 1996), a circumstance that prompted the adoption of public safety programmes involving significant youth-related components (Arriagada and Godoy, 1999; Buvinic, Morrison and Shifter, 1998).

Similarly, research revealed the limitations of the supposedly universal approaches, which only benefited integrated youth from the middle and upper sectors (those best prepared to take advantage of the services offered by universal public policies). It also underlined the limitations of approaches excessively centralized in the State, which failed to harness the enormous potential at the local level where institutions and services might be nearer to real problems and where young people need specific support for their social integration. The most recent alternative responses have sought to focus on those youth sectors with the greatest difficulties and needs, and to develop municipal youth policies based on approaches that are clearly decentralized in terms of public administration, as will be seen in detail below.

Notwithstanding the relevance of the issue, perhaps least attention has been paid to the many tensions between the government and private bodies responsible for providing services and support to young people. From a long list, two in particular should be highlighted: tensions between promotional approaches and those centred on the social control of youth (advocated by institutions that specialize in social policies and by ministries of the interior and defence, respectively); and tensions between approaches that stem from a basic mistrust of young people (who are seen as dangerous) and those that promote their manipulation and exploitation for various particular ends. In the face of these latter approaches—which are broadly predominant—a few initiatives have sought to induce more constructive and freer participation, but these have had scant practical repercussions. Naturally, this all limits the real development of youth policies, as will be seen below.

Lastly, and from the institutional viewpoint, public policies on young people have faced considerable problems that have primarily sprung from the issue of the leading and coordinating institutions among the many bodies implementing policies in the sector. For decades, it was considered unnecessary to have specialized institutions in these fields. From the 1970s, by contrast, some countries began to create institutes and even ministries of youth affairs, the cases of Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela being the most prominent. In the course of the 1980s and 1990s, these specialized institutions were extended to practically the whole region.

In practice, however, these institutes and specialized ministries were unable to define their functions precisely, and they began to compete—under very unequal conditions, admittedly—with the big ministries (especially those active in the social arena) in implementing programmes geared towards the young in education, employment, health and similar areas. These programmes failed to have significant effects and caused serious inter-institutional disputes. A substantial confusion about roles has to date hindered the performance of the specialized institutions: some have vainly sought to represent youth in the state apparatus (and vice versa), and others have tried to play a leading role, placing themselves above public institutions of long-standing tradition while lacking either the legitimacy or the power and resources to perform such functions effectively.

Recently, efforts have been made to agree on some operational roles for the set of public and private actors involved in the formulation and implementation of public policies on youth, giving some functions to the whole group while offering the specialized institutions the roles of linkage and general

promotion through services of knowledge generation, information distribution, the training of technical personnel and permanent monitoring of public policies. They do not directly implement programmes and projects. That function remains the preserve of the large sectoral agencies and the municipalities, so as to decentralize operational administration as much as possible (Rodríguez, 1999b and 1999c).

Time will tell if such a reconsideration of policy will give rise to a more efficient and appropriate administration. In an effort to advance in that respect, attempts are being made to adapt tools being tried in other areas of social development to the field of youth policy management. These include creating and regulating markets in some key areas that until recently operated in a monopolistic manner in almost all the countries of the region (work training, for example); devising operational strategies that variously combine the financing of demand and the financing of supply in key services, especially in education and health; and a flexible organization geared towards the results of the specialized institutions themselves, in an effort to introduce productivity-related pay and to flatten out decision-making processes by increasing collective responsibility for the activities undertaken (Saveedof (ed.), 1998; World Bank, 1998; CLAD, 1998; IDB, 1998). These developments began only recently, and hence rigorous assessments must be awaited before specific judgements can be made of their usefulness and practical viability.

## I. YOUTH AND PUBLIC POLICIES (II): TACKLING GENERATIONAL INEQUITIES

Lastly, in substantive terms, it is important to view public policies on youth from a forward-looking perspective and schematically to define the main challenges of the coming decade. To those ends, it is useful to specify the approach that this report will apply to such perspectives, focusing the analysis on those intra- and intergenerational inequities that must be addressed assiduously in the context of productive transformation and the construction of more equal and more democratic societies.

Many studies of social inequities in Latin America and the Caribbean have centred on social stratification as a whole, on the urban-rural divide, and on gender differences. However, there are still very few studies covering the specific issue of intergenerational inequities. A cursory glance confirms that, in most countries of the region, resources are distributed very unevenly among the various population groups. Most support is concentrated on the least needy sectors, thereby reinforcing the existing inequities to the detriment of the weakest. Resource-allocation favours formal sector workers in particular, while those neglected include children and adolescents above all, as well as senior citizens in some countries (in others, these are among the privileged).

The picture outlined above emerges from an analysis of poverty levels in the region, differentiating according to how families are constituted and the stage of the life cycle in which they find themselves. The ECLAC publication *Social Panorama of Latin America, 1997* reports that in Brazil, poverty in single-person households stands at 4.9%, while in families with children below 12 and between 13 and 18 it is at 49%. This is also the case in Mexico, where the respective figures are 2.8% and 37.7% (in the case of families with adolescent children). In Colombia, poverty in single-person households is at 6.6%; among families with children under 12 it stands at 51%; and in households with adolescent children it goes as high as 52.7% (ECLAC, 1998b).

Even in more equitable countries (such as Uruguay), intergenerational inequities are readily apparent. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, *Desarrollo humano en Uruguay, 1999*, poverty in the group aged 0 to 5 in 1997 stood at 46.5% but this systematically declined with the increase in age: 41% in the 6 to 13 age group, 27.4% among young people aged 14 to

29, 19.6% among adults between 30 and 64, and only 8.3% in those over 65. In 1990 the scale was the same, but poverty levels were higher in all groups. However, the figures show that trends in the 1990s were more favourable for the oldest (the rate fell from 17.2% in 1990 to 8.3% in 1997) than for children (for whom the rate was virtually unchanged: 46.7% and 46.5%, respectively). This is happening in a context whose index of inequality (measured as the coefficient between the richest 10% and the poorest 40% of the population) fell from 6.2% to 4.7% between 1990 and 1997. This is the lowest level of inequality in the region, even compared with the 9.6% in Argentina and the 11.8% in Chile, which slightly surpassed Uruguay in human development (UNDP, 1999).

Apart from this, there are blatant intragenerational inequities. Concentrating the analysis exclusively on youth, internal inequalities are especially apparent between men and women, between highly educated youth and young people with fewer qualifications, between rural and urban youth, and between young people from ethnic groups and the descendants of whites, among other groups. These differences are crucial in juvenile development, for which reason they should be accorded a high priority in public policy-making.

In particular, and with respect to intergenerational inequities, Latin American and Caribbean societies should note the structural limitations which—from the viewpoint of general development—are attendant on continuing to favour the adult population to the detriment of the young. From this perspective, the exclusion of youth handicaps the whole of society and is not only, nor fundamentally, a problem exclusive to young people. As regards intragenerational inequities, it is important to be alert to the dangers involved in continuing to favour the most advantaged young people and neglecting the most vulnerable. This does not seem to be a sensible option in the context of the development process.

Using the horizon of the coming years as a reference, there is a clear need to define a linked set of priorities for action that could include the following specific elements:

- (i) To make great efforts in education and health, as a key to human capital formation;
- (ii) To prioritize the social integration of excluded youth as the main substantive policy of the future;
- (iii) To consider the insertion of young people in the labour market as key to their social integration;
- (iv) To give a high priority to the prevention of juvenile violence, as a key to the peaceful coexistence so desired by all those in Latin American and the Caribbean;
- (v) To foment broad and profound youth participation as an important factor in the democratic consolidation of the countries of the region; and
- (vi) To foster voluntary youth work as a central hub, linking each of the above goals.

## II. YOUTH AND POPULATION DYNAMICS

This chapter presents a brief review of some aspects of the dynamics of the youth population in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, with emphasis on demographic trends and on the specific characteristics and significance of those trends. It also identifies some of their general repercussions.

The chapter comprises three sections. The first section describes the demographic evolution and some indicators relating to the population of young people in the countries, focusing on the period 2000-2050. It examines changes in the growth of this population in terms of the proportion and number of young people within the framework of the various stages of the demographic transition under way in the countries. This section also highlights some of the probable social repercussions arising from changes in the youth population and outlines the demographic characteristics of the context in which youth live. Finally, it presents data on mortality and causes of death among young people.

The second section deals with migration and the spatial distribution of the youth population. It includes some basic background for analysing the evolution observed in recent decades and then examines the participation of young people in changing modalities of internal migration, as well as population distribution patterns according to major administrative divisions and the urban or rural nature of communities. The section concludes with some reflections on intraurban residential segregation.

The third section concerns international migration of young people. It begins with some general background information and then describes migratory patterns within the region and to the United States, noting specific quantitative and qualitative features and examining the significance of these patterns for young people.

### A. EFFECTS OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION ON THE VOLUME AND GROWTH OF THE YOUTH POPULATION

#### 1. Demographic transition in Latin America and the Caribbean

The evolution of the youth population as a subgroup or specific category has been conditioned by the general demographic transition, which determines its size and relative weight with respect to the other age groups. Demographic transition is the process whereby populations move from a population dynamic characterized by high mortality and fertility rates and low levels of population growth to one that is also marked by low growth but with lower levels of mortality and fertility. In the initial stages of the transition—because mortality generally begins to fall before fertility—rapid population growth occurs; however, this growth then slows and begins to decrease as the decline in fertility accelerates.

Before the onset of the transition in the mid-20th century, high mortality in most countries of Latin America and the Caribbean limited average life expectancy to around 50 years, while fertility rates averaged 6 children per woman. Fifty years later, average life expectancy in the countries of the region has risen to 70, while fertility is under 3 children. These changes, which occurred over a relatively short period compared to the European transition, have had a decisive impact on the age distribution of the population. Generally speaking, the trend has been toward ageing of the population, with a marked reduction in the proportion of population aged under 15 years, moderate growth, and later stabilization of the proportion of population between 15 and 59 years of age, coupled with a notable increase in older adults. In absolute

numbers, perhaps the most prominent trend over the next few years will be this ageing of the population, with all the requirements and new demands that it will entail.

Based on a general analysis of the demographic transition under way in the countries of the region, as well as earlier studies (ECLAC/ CELADE, 1995c) and the most recent changes in demographic trends, the countries can be grouped into three major categories according to their stage of transition: countries at an advanced stage of transition, with low or moderate birth and mortality rates and low population growth rates (Argentina, Barbados, Chile, Cuba, Jamaica, and Uruguay); countries in full transition, which have moderate birth rates and low or moderate mortality, which leads to moderate natural growth rates (Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela); and countries at an incipient or intermediate stage of transition, which continue to have high birth rates, high or moderate mortality, and high natural growth rates (Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Paraguay).

## **2. Effects of the demographic transition on the youth population: growth and relative weight**

The identification of young people in demographic terms is relatively simple, although some caution should be exercised, especially in attempting to examine probable future trends in the long term. The end of the period of youth, defined here as 29 years of age, may not be the same by mid-century, owing to changes in the social and cultural significance attached to this stage of life. Profound changes are expected to occur in terms of demands for greater education and training, continued declines in fertility, postponement of marriage, and the emergence of new and unstable household structures, among other factors that have already prolonged the period leading up to adult life. As a result, it is possible that the formation of identities and the assumption of responsibilities may be affected by marked asynchrony in the roles of young people, thus further blurring the current, conventionally established line between youth and adulthood. Hence, in spite of the demographic trends described below, perceptions of the demographic importance of the youth population may vary in the light of social, cultural, and economic changes over the next few decades.

Between the ages of 15 and 29, people acquire the skills and knowledge that will enable them to perform more or less successfully for the rest of their lives, whence the need for society to attend to the necessities of young people, offering them opportunities and facilitating access to those opportunities. This section will examine the changes in the growth of the youth population and in the proportion and number of young people, in the framework of the various stages of the demographic transition.

### **2.1 Growth of the youth population**

One of the repercussions of the demographic changes of recent decades has been the decline in the growth rate of the total population, which, for the region as a whole, fell from 2.5% in 1970-1975 to 1.6% in 1995-2000. The main factor behind this decline was the abrupt drop in growth of the child population (from 2% to 0.3%) during the same periods.

Growth in the youth population (15-29 years) also slowed markedly, although this reduction occurred less rapidly than in the case of the child population, falling from a rate of 3.4% to 1.4% between those two periods. For the period 2000-2005, the growth rate is expected to be almost as low as that of the population aged 0-14 years, in contrast to the rate in the adult population (30-64 years), which began to decline only during the period 1995-2000, and, especially, the rate among older adults. As a result of the

population ageing process, the growth of the older population is projected to peak at close to 4% during the second decade of the century (see figure II.1).

In the period 1970-1975, as a consequence of the high fertility rates of the past, the youth population grew at rates of between 3% and 5% across virtually the entire region, with the exceptions of Cuba, Suriname, Uruguay and, to a lesser extent, Argentina. The current picture has changed radically, however, both for the countries at an advanced stage of the demographic transition and for those in full transition, where the decrease in fertility rates has occurred more recently but also more rapidly (Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, and Panama). In the countries where the transition has been slower and began later (for example, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Paraguay), even in the last five years of the 20th century the youth population continued to grow at an average annual rate of 3–3.5%.

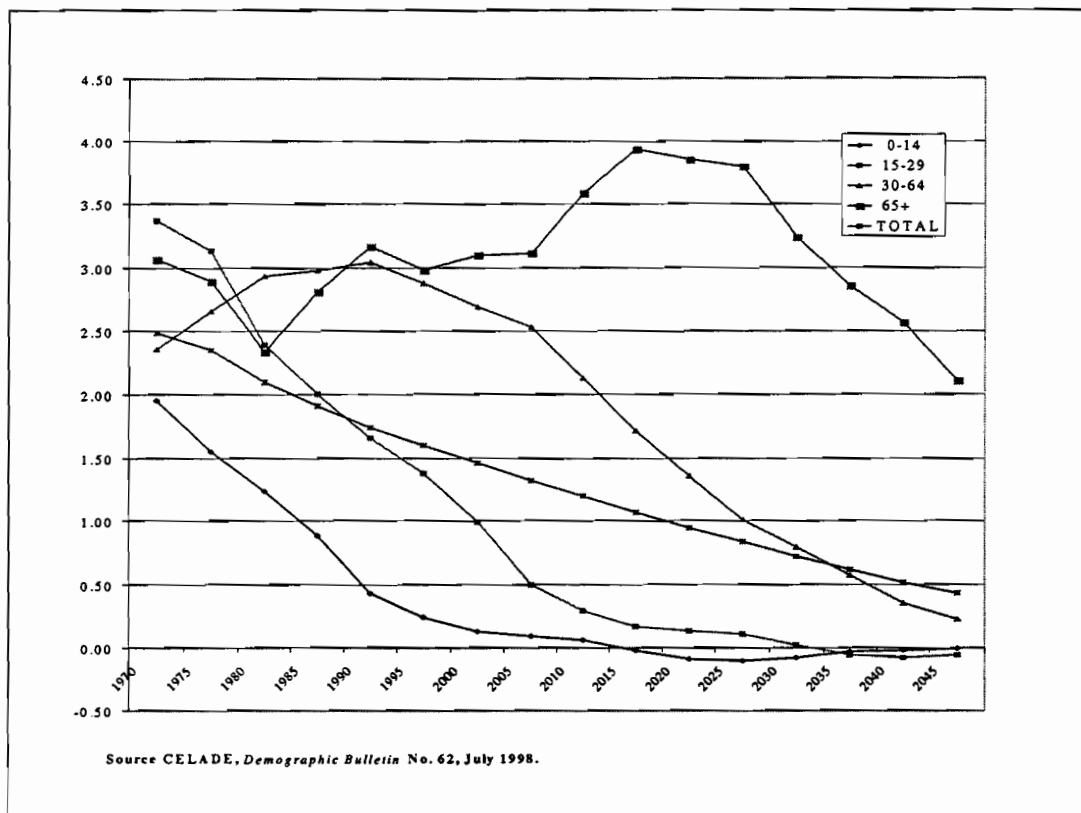
In summary, the trend toward declining growth rates in this age group could be said to have solidified in most countries of the region, and over the next two or three five-year periods the rates will be very low —or even negative.

## **2.2 Relative weight of youth in the total population**

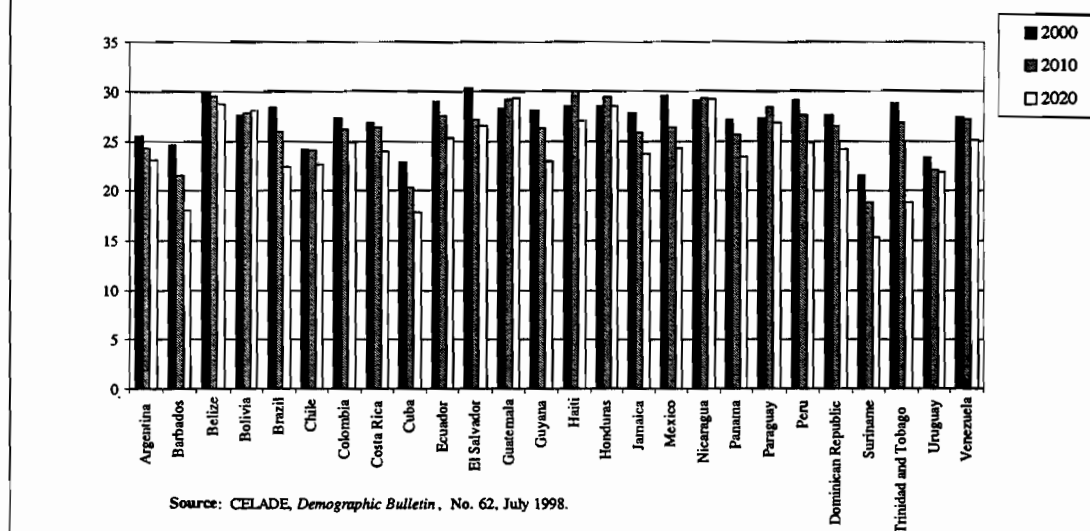
In the region as a whole, the population aged 15-29 makes up 28% of the total population. The relative weight of the youth population increased slightly until 1990, but began to decrease steadily thereafter and is projected to reach a level near 24% in the year 2020. Within the various stages of the transition, the countries are also differentiated by the relative importance of this age group, which is a reflection of differences in the decline of fertility rates 15 or 30 years ago (see figure II.2). While in the countries at an advanced stage of the transition, the proportion of young people ranges from 22% to 26%, in the other countries the figure is between 27% and 30%. In any case, future predictions indicate a reduction in the relative proportion of young people as a consequence of the sustained decrease which fertility rates are expected to undergo before reaching replacement level. A moderate contraction is foreseen in the next 20 years. Only in Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Paraguay can a percentage increase in the youth population be expected in the year 2010.



**Figure II.1**  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: GROWTH RATES OF TOTAL POPULATION AND OF AGE GROUPS WITHIN THE POPULATION AGED 15-29**



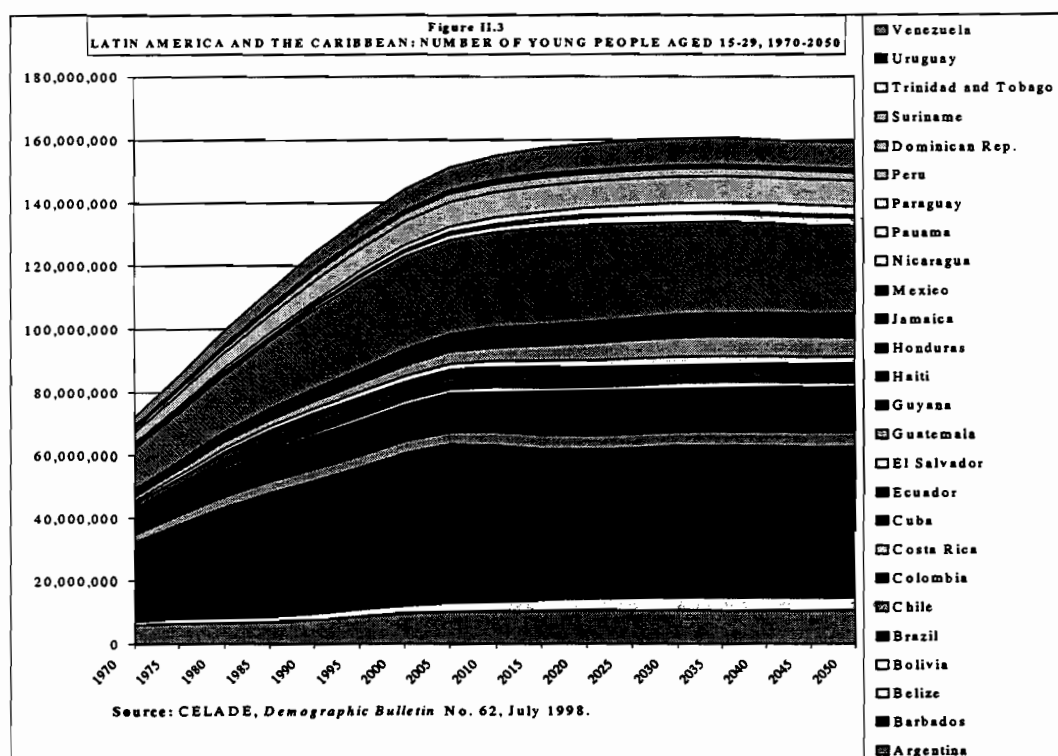
**Figure II.2**  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15-29, BY COUNTRIES RANKED ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF GROWTH IN THE YEAR 2000**





### 3. Impact of youth population growth on social sectors

The decrease in the growth rate and relative weight of the youth population in the total population does not mean that this group is shrinking in absolute terms or that it has ceased to grow altogether. However, the changes are quite significant and, from a demographic viewpoint, the future holds vastly different prospects from those of the past. Indeed, between 1970 and 2000, the number of young people essentially doubled, rising from 72 to 144 million (see figure II.3). This has placed tremendous pressure on educational systems, health care systems, labour markets, and the demand for housing and basic infrastructure, recreational and cultural opportunities, and a wide variety of activities, goods and services. Beginning in the year 2000, however, growth in the numbers of young people is expected to slow considerably, with figures close to 160 million in 2020 and a progressive stabilization between 2020 and 2050 (see figure II.3).



The trends described above represent the general outlook for the overall youth population of the region. The situation in the three groups of countries differs owing to differences in the rate and time at which fertility began to decline. The various projected scenarios—all of which culminate in a reduction in the absolute number of young people in the medium or long terms—pose different challenges for the countries, depending on current conditions and future expectations regarding their demographic dynamic. Some of the specific features of the three groups of countries are examined below.

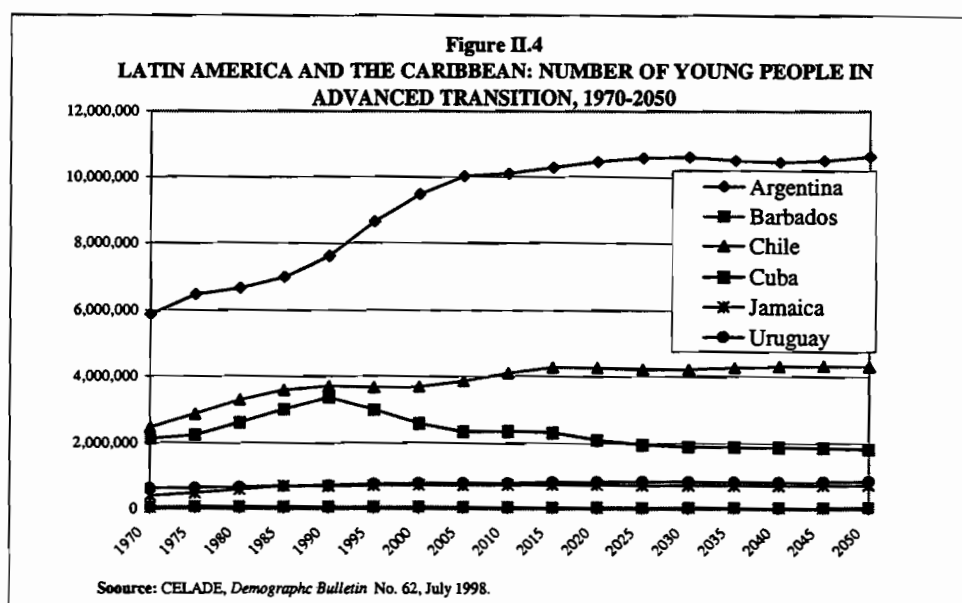
In the countries at an advanced stage of transition, there is currently little growth in the absolute number of young people (see figure II.4), coupled with a dwindling of their relative weight as a social group—a phenomenon that some analysts have called the “demographic gift” or “demographic window of opportunity.” At the same time, these countries are characterized by broad coverage of educational and health systems and basic services infrastructure. Generally speaking, they enjoy a situation of privilege, in which, if the available resources are put to good use, the following results could be achieved:

(a) improvement in the quality of education, with an educational system suited to social requirements and an increase in the availability of human resources;

(b) improvement in the health of young people, including education in both general health and reproductive health in order to foster preventive behaviours;

(c) incorporation of young people into the labour market in a rational, productive, and creative manner and in keeping with their capabilities;

(d) increased opportunities for participation by young people in social, political, cultural, recreational, and civic and volunteer activities, as a means of encouraging their involvement and discouraging the behaviours characteristic of situations of exclusion (depression, drug addiction, delinquency).



The trends in the volume of youth population, combined with relatively predictable levels of fertility and mortality over the next few years, afford an opportunity to refine and give greater substantive continuity to policies oriented towards these social groups.

In the countries in full demographic transition, the reduction in the number of young people is not expected to become really apparent until well into the twenty-first century, especially in Brazil and Mexico (see table II.1 and figure II.5). In Brazil, the decline is expected to begin in 2010, while in Mexico it will not start before 2020. These countries therefore face a situation which, while not characterized by discrete growth in the youth population, will show steady growth in absolute terms through at least the first decade of the twenty-first century. Though these countries generally have broad educational system coverage, there is room for improvement, both at the primary and secondary levels, particularly among the most deprived segments of the population, which are most affected by poverty and have the highest school dropout rates. From the standpoint of health, since the child and youth populations in these countries have not yet decreased significantly, while the adult and older adult populations are expanding steadily, increasing demand for health services from all age groups is expected. Young people will face considerable competition for health care, given the still high demand for maternal and child health services, which is probably not yet being fully met due to social differences, pockets of high fertility, poverty, and incomplete coverage among vulnerable groups: poor, marginal, rural, and indigenous populations. They can also expect major competition for health services from the older adult population, since age patterns and the structure of causes of death point to a rise in health problems in that age group. Nevertheless, these countries also have the potential to benefit from the expected changes in the demographic sphere, since the growth in the labour force—if it is accompanied by enhanced opportunities for education and employment— would enable young people to play a more active role in the development of their countries.

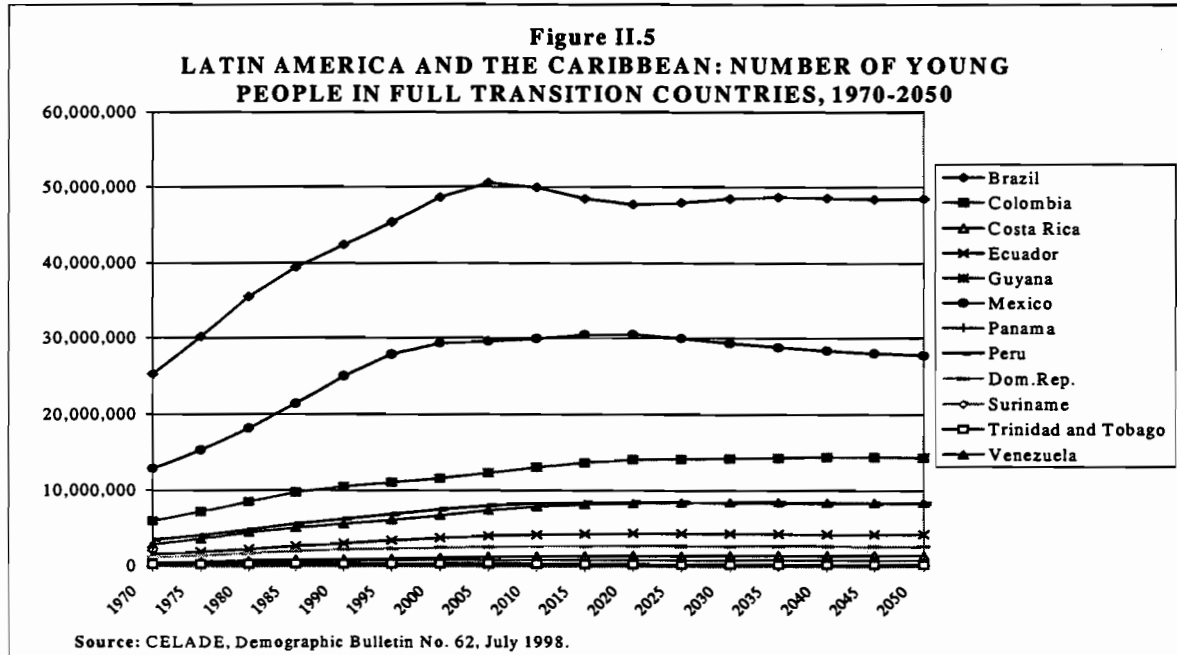


Table II.1

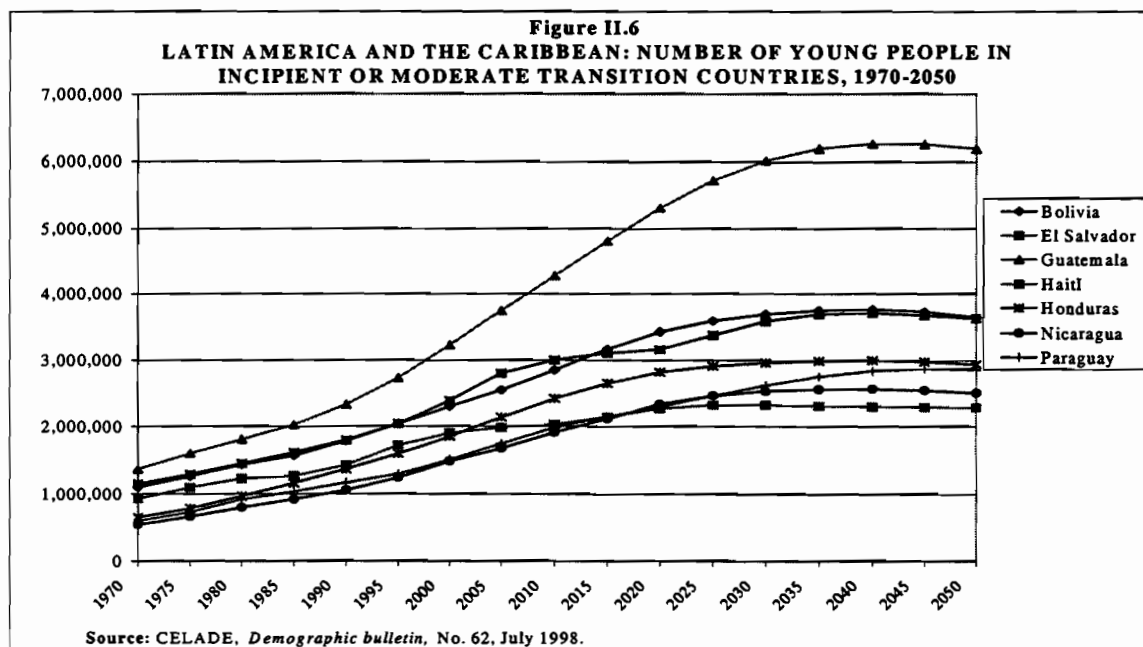
## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15-29, BY COUNTRY, 1970-2050

Country	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Argentina	5871601	6472710	6661965	6999788	7607806	8636237	9475891	10029332	10103234	10288376	10472758	10599738	10619142	10514219	10464723	10509006	10637125
Barbados	57998	69129	75071	75678	73464	69172	66767	62408	61064	56649	52749	49566	49064	48783	47962	47029	46368
Belize	29734	36221	39178	47785	55956	64495	72237	79268	87261	94692	99350	66305	89692	92940	92983	96099	96963
Bolivia	1093845	1256670	1429832	1562560	1781468	2042102	2303567	2550439	2853349	3168474	3429448	3590602	3693754	3750212	3763080	3728187	3642287
Brazil	25221513	30188896	35507994	39410571	42428079	45362662	48606703	50566307	49932869	48449535	47660677	47914127	48441697	48638666	48536482	48369179	48426101
Chile	2460661	2849740	3281059	3583198	3700606	3670433	3686181	3863083	4099664	4270339	4259971	4211049	4214399	4269962	4310865	4317426	4304142
Colombia	5925595	7182059	8522281	9741828	10490930	11049597	11582097	12319302	13062664	13662618	14081768	14164567	14214084	14312228	14406670	14416930	14334716
Costa Rica	451651	571699	706994	812019	866900	970829	1085158	1220498	1286208	1321811	1340674	1379755	1413685	1433724	1437986	1433387	1425386
Cuba	2131205	2236752	2602322	2996557	3353902	2984925	2566998	2333078	2348607	2299432	2088107	1957309	1895782	1889344	1879438	1857438	1817434
Ecuador	1515988	1834559	2200583	2553574	2935192	3324526	3669427	3926388	4103998	4211792	4280569	4288675	4260281	4214169	4165444	4156590	4174090
El Salvador	928787	1092496	1223066	1263287	1420282	1721265	1902300	1982880	2028661	2144034	2271458	2325456	2325347	2311350	2301688	2289400	2287208
Guatemala	1362715	1597434	1808176	2026816	2329063	2735299	3229991	3740322	4274464	4806541	5313646	5721742	6018935	6193443	6263209	6254251	6194931
Guyana	177223	204646	232108	261021	262729	248497	241881	234499	243255	238181	231341	223818	222284	227313	229383	228123	225657
Haiti	1146473	1283942	1446441	1609302	1794391	2041694	2391892	2804377	3000768	3108301	3163902	3380555	3583498	3692249	3707659	3672721	3628972
Honduras	654740	782502	965575	1156748	1359837	1590880	1852447	2137566	2420302	2652544	2823344	2914317	2963938	2989660	2999559	2978250	2940439
Jamaica	391000	478995	590500	701655	688370	707796	720645	719130	730156	732645	735729	723290	713272	710561	715180	720486	721067
Mexico	12839462	15327746	18218528	21417282	24976764	27841617	29293568	29557502	29924470	30438293	30463538	29964180	29322270	28773762	28322597	27995859	27718803
Nicaragua	547406	668070	798395	920625	1053627	1239258	1476892	1675295	1913555	2115176	2339616	2465530	2534834	2563611	2566366	2547298	2508955
Panama	386502	457438	543727	630792	703437	746824	776609	805444	838241	854786	850249	836458	831284	832083	838939	844607	847304
Paraguay	604809	730778	919435	1031221	1160366	1288755	1501191	1743977	1984441	2148236	2303889	2461376	2624168	2754563	2840398	2875145	2861030
Peru	3383180	4022678	4774371	5510153	6189848	6829089	7470106	7992114	8259239	8402571	8423656	8412329	8397479	8363496	8309037	8287865	8297723
Dominican Republic	1130088	1375273	1669531	1955374	2152910	2268283	2348463	2479187	2583288	2640496	2609031	2582625	2582625	2599668	2587044	2560532	2553726
Suriname	67000	68797	79816	93250	92883	86470	89622	91389	85334	79946	76702	74704	75451	77152	75527	72762	70541
Trinidad and Tobago	254489	294106	335722	356597	330064	335343	373263	389800	370242	314337	274848	268737	279831	284500	275100	263353	257642
Uruguay	634947	631257	667327	684293	714452	756028	779461	786232	787660	815002	831461	833380	828414	822372	823779	830168	837667
Venezuela	2774063	3541781	4415459	4986079	5520561	6049746	6642164	7352946	7828906	8145152	8290711	8395526	8460331	8456561	8377132	8352323	8385478

Source: CELADE, Demographic Bulletin No. 62, July 1998.

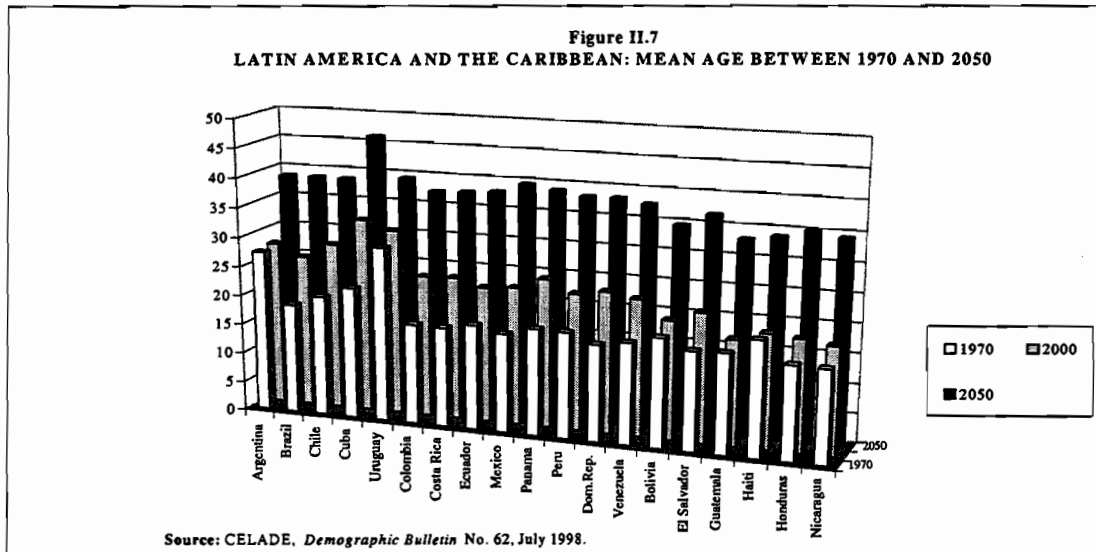
Finally, in the countries at an incipient or intermediate stage of the transition, the absolute number of young people is not expected to decrease before 2040, although every year the number of youths added to this population will diminish (see figure II.6). Fertility rates in these countries remained relatively high for many years, and they will continue to see growth in the number of young people for several decades, owing to the high growth potential implicit in the age structure of their populations, which include large numbers of women of childbearing age who are descended from past cohorts characterized by high fertility. Unlike the countries in the other two groups, these countries have sizeable rural populations, high levels of illiteracy, and low coverage of educational and health systems. Hence, they face multiple social challenges, notably, serious infrastructure deficiencies and a need to expand the coverage of educational and health systems and the supply of housing and basic services, coupled with the urgency of incorporating young people from the poorest social sectors and indigenous groups into the mainstream of society.

It is interesting to note that in the countries in which the fertility rate is still diminishing, internal social differences in reproductive patterns—which are pronounced—mean that young people in the lowest income strata are largely responsible for generational replacement in their societies. When this happens, unless there are opportunities for social mobility, young people from the wealthiest homes—who have access to higher levels of education and consequently achieve greater occupational and social success—end up participating to a much lesser extent in the reproduction of society. Analysis of this situation is a complex undertaking, but it does help clarify the demographic role that young people from the most well-off households play in societal dynamics.



#### 4. Youth and the demographic context

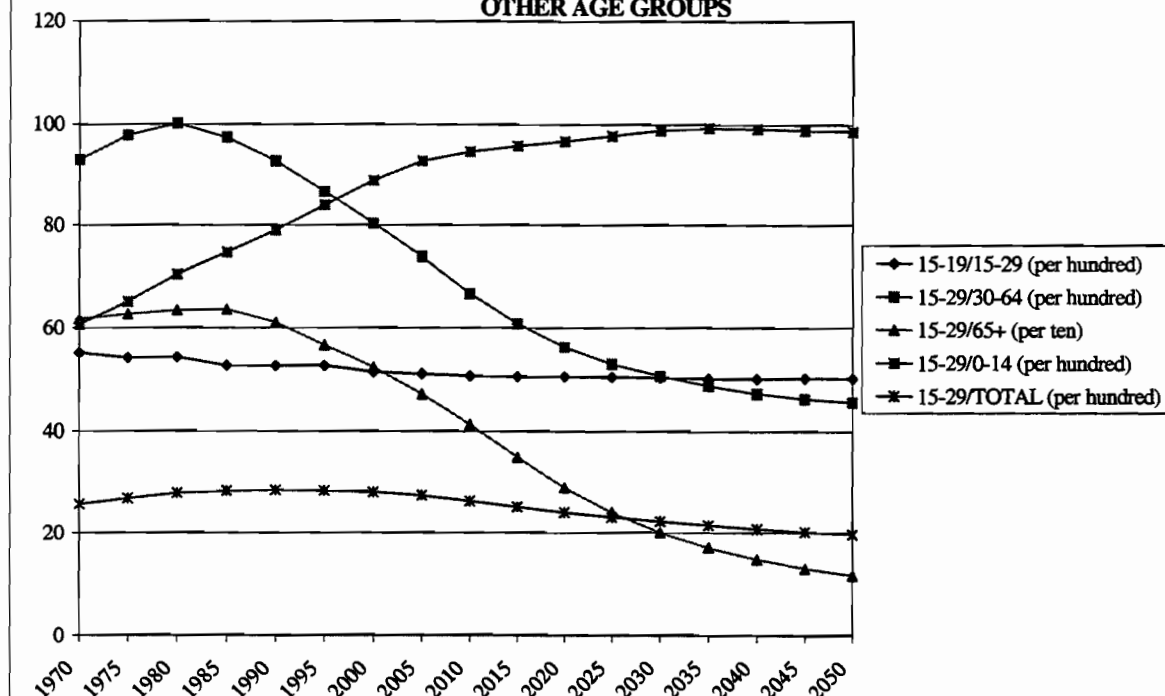
Prior to the demographic transition and in its initial stages, during the period of declining fertility, young people lived in societies which, as a whole, were eminently young. In Latin America, 50% of the population was under the age of 19 in 1970, whereas by 2000 the median age had risen to nearly 25. In the future, if fertility rates continue to decline as expected, the median age of the population will climb to 38 (see figure II.7).



In the year 2000 the most dissimilar cases are —at the high end— Cuba, where the median age is the highest in the region (33 years), and Argentina and Uruguay, where the median age is 28 and 31 years, respectively, and —on the other end— the countries in which the transition began later and is only moderately advanced, where in most cases half the population is still under 18-20 years of age. Between these two extremes are the countries in full transition, where the median age is around 24. By the year 2050, the median age in the vast majority of the countries in the region is expected to rise to between 35 and 40, except in Cuba, which will have the oldest population, with half of its people under the age of 46.

Other indicators also attest eloquently to the decline in the relative importance of the youth population (see figure II.8).

**Figure II.8**  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: RATIO OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO**  
**OTHER AGE GROUPS**



Source: CELADE, *Demographic Bulletin* No. 62, July 1998.

(a) The proportion of the youngest members (aged 15-19) with respect to the total youth population (15-29) shows a downward trend from 1970 to 2005, indicating that the group itself has a slight tendency toward ageing: from 55% the proportion dropped to approximately 51%, the level at which it is expected to stabilize.

(b) The ratio of young people (15-29) to children (0-14) shows an upward trend, as was to be expected due to declining fertility. In 1970, there were 61 young people per 100 children, whereas in 2000 the ratio is 89:100. With fertility rates remaining low and reaching replacement level by 2025, the ratio will increase to 95:100 in the year 2010 and will reach parity by 2030.

(c) The ratio of young people (15-29) to adults (30-64) shows a downward trend, in contrast to the rising trend of the past. It began to decline in 1985, dropping from 97 young people per 100 adults to 80:100 in the year 2000. This trend is expected to accelerate, with the ratio decreasing to 67:100 in 2010, to 56:100 in 2020, and to 46:100 in 2050.

(d) The most dramatic ratio—and that which most clearly illustrates the enormous change in the age structure of the population—is the ratio of young people (15-29) to older adults (65 and over). Although this change was predictable, it is nonetheless remarkable. While the ratio remained fairly stable from 1970 to 1985 (at around 62 young people per 10 older adults), in the latter year it began a steep

decline, falling to 52:10 in 2000. It is expected to drop to 41:10 by 2010 and to 29:10 by 2020. By 2050 it is projected that there will be only 8 young people for every 10 older adults.

These indicators show that, increasingly, as the demographic transition advances, young people will be living in an environment in which adults, older adults, and the elderly predominate, with ever-smaller proportions of children and youths. This is likely to have an impact on societal expectations and demands regarding the behaviour and role of young people. While, on the one hand, greater investment than in the past may give young people a more prominent role in society, it is possible that this role will necessitate their assuming greater responsibilities at earlier ages. It is also probable that, because they are surrounded mainly by adults, young people will tend to emulate adult behaviours and adopt adult goals more quickly. An alternative hypothesis is that the changes in labour markets, given the demand for a better-qualified workforce, will lead to an extension of the period of transition into adult life; the relative scarcity of young people may also increase their value and foster social and cultural encouragement of a longer transition period.

## **5. Mortality in the youth population**

The health status of young people is greatly influenced by social and economic context, ease of access to health care services, and family situation, as well as by their specific individual and biological characteristics. One way of examining health status is to look at rates and causes of death, which is the subject of the following paragraphs.

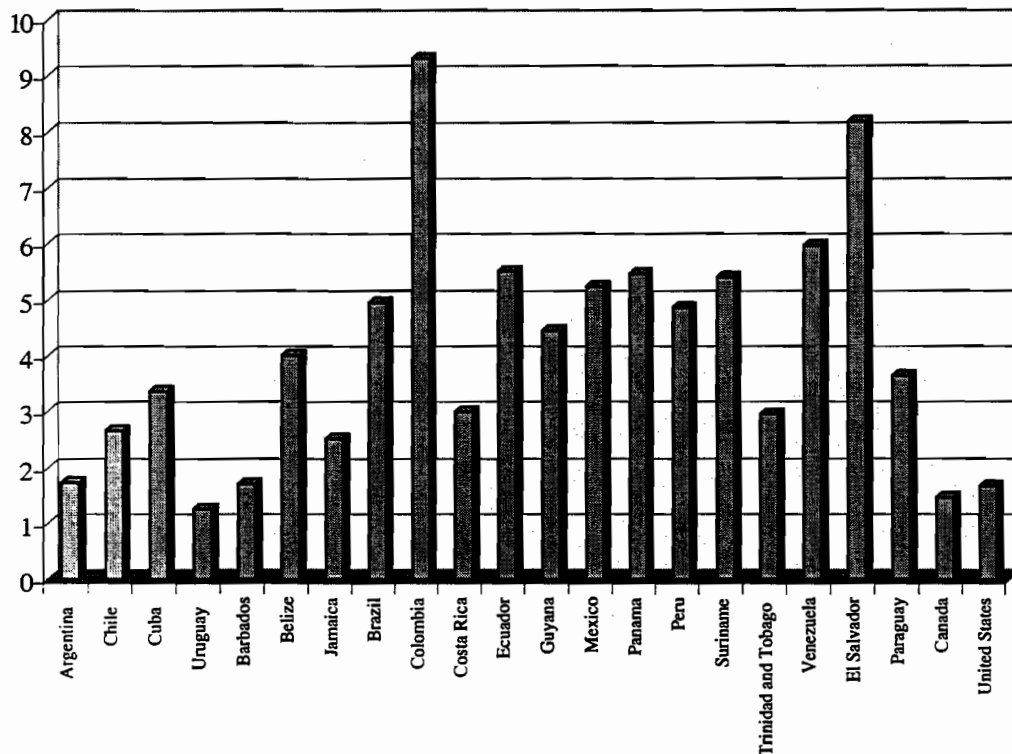
The statistics available at the national level do not make it possible to distinguish differences in the health status of young people in different social groups or the impact of poverty on the distribution of factors that lead to their death. Studies by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO, 1998a), however, reveal that extreme economic deprivation, family conflicts, a family history of behaviour problems, and lack of a protective atmosphere are common risk factors in the majority of cases of substance abuse, delinquency, pregnancy, and school dropout among adolescents.

### **5.1 Mortality rates**

Compared to other age groups, death rates are relatively low among young people, and their deaths represent only a small fraction of total mortality. In Argentina, Barbados, and Uruguay, deaths of young people account for less than 2% of all deaths, which is similar to the proportion in Canada and the United States. In most of the countries, the proportion is between 2% and 6%, although in Colombia and El Salvador —based on data currently available— the figure ranges from 8% to 10% due to high levels of violence (see figure II.9).



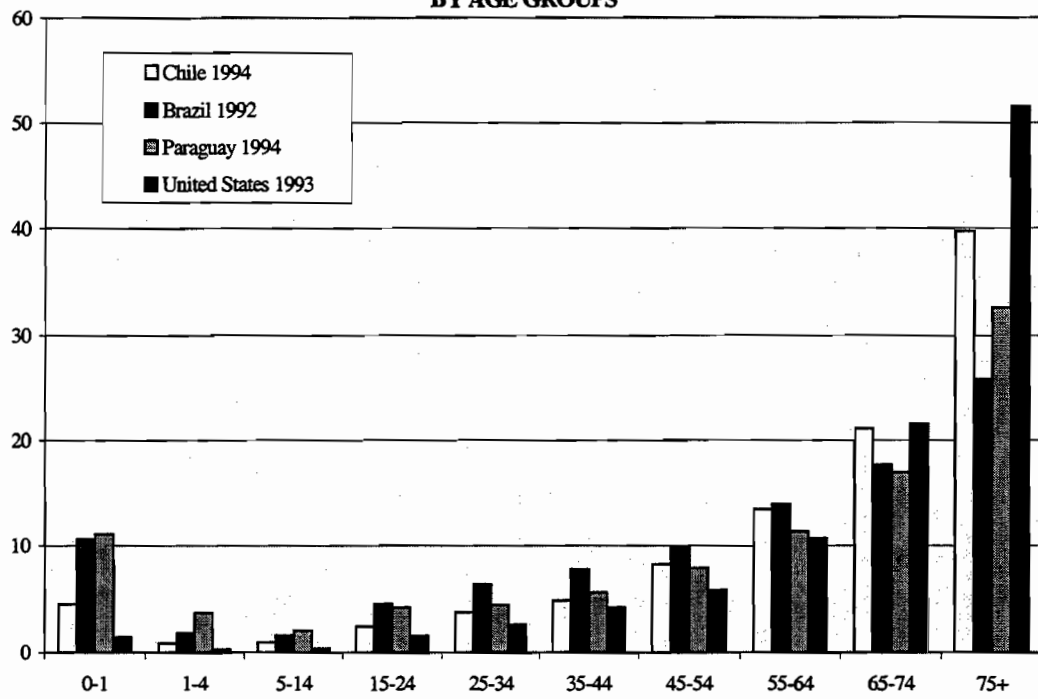
**Figure II.9**  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: DEATHS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AS A**  
**PROPORTION OF TOTAL DEATHS**  
**CIRCA 1990**



**Source:** CELADE, based on the respective Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

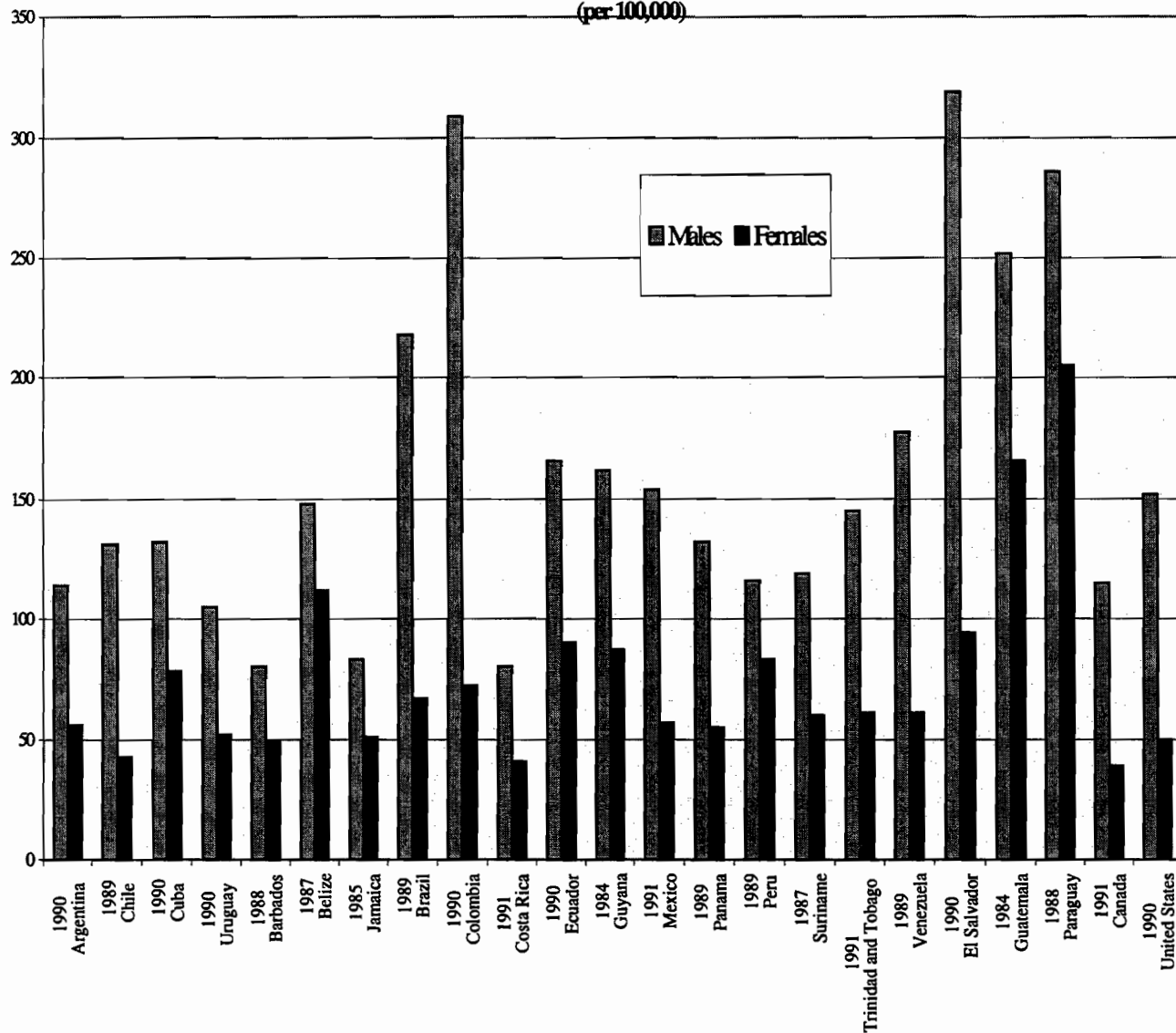
In countries with different levels of general mortality, the deaths of young people have greater weight only with respect to younger age groups —children aged 1-4 and 5-14— except for the group composed of under-1 children, which has a higher risk of death (see figure II.10). The sex-specific mortality rates in this age group show clear differences, with consistently higher mortality among males. The difference is with especially striking in the cases of Brazil, Colombia, and El Salvador (see figure II.11).

**Figure II.10**  
**CHILE, BRAZIL, PARAGUAY AND UNITED STATES: PERCENTAGE OF DEATHS**  
**BY AGE GROUPS**



**Source:** CELADE, based on the respective Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

**Figure II.11**  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: MORTALITY RATES**  
**AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE BY SEX, CIRCA 1990**  
 (per 100,000)



Source: CELADE, based on the respective Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

## 5.2 Mortality by cause

Although general mortality among young people is relatively low, when the figures are broken down by the five leading groups of causes of death —communicable diseases, malignant neoplasms, diseases of the circulatory system, external causes, and other causes— the large proportion of deaths due to external causes stands out, especially in the case of males (see table II.2). In most of the countries, external causes account for over 50% of deaths among male youths, while among females this cause accounts for between 30% and 40%. Male deaths also outnumber females deaths for the other groups of causes. In the case of deaths due to other causes, the death rates among females are similar to those of males or, in many cases, higher, since these causes include conditions such as diabetes, nutritional deficiencies, mental disorders, diseases of the digestive and urinary systems, and, in particular, causes specific to women, such as complications of pregnancy, childbirth, or the puerperium, which are commonly labelled “maternal deaths” and include some deaths due to abortion.

Table II.2

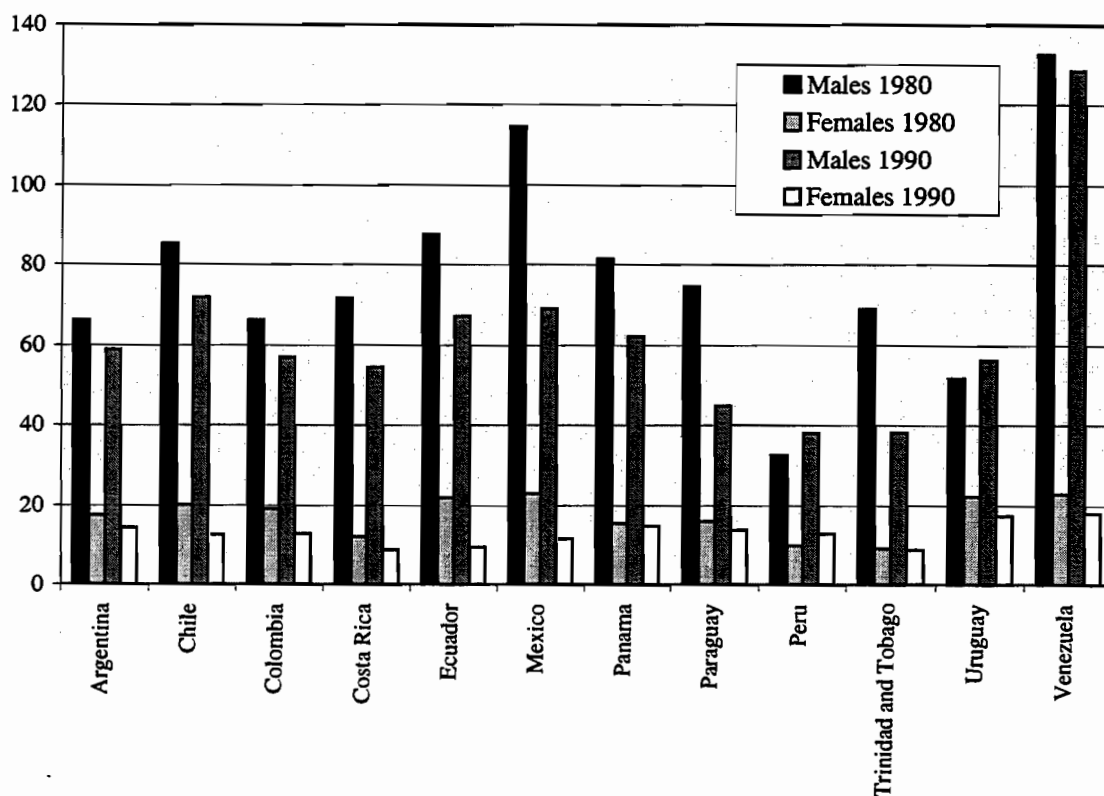
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: MORTALITY RATES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15-24,  
BY CAUSE OF DEATH, CIRCA 1990**

Countries	Total rate		Communicable diseases		Malignant neoplasms		Diseases of circulatory system		External causes		Other causes		Ill-defined causes	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Argentina (1992)	119.7	52.3	5.2	4.3	8.3	6.5	10.8	8.0	78.6	19.0	14.3	12.7	2.5	1.8
Barbados (1994)	117.4	81.8	4.3	0.0	13.0	18.2	8.7	0.0	69.6	18.2	21.7	40.9	0.0	4.5
Belize (1989)	110.5	47.4	21.1	5.3	5.3	5.3	15.8	0.0	31.6	10.5	36.8	21.1	0.0	5.3
Brazil (1992)	190.5	59.9	9.6	6.5	5.7	4.2	7.1	6.0	137.2	20.1	17.8	15.6	13.2	7.5
Colombia (1994)	341.2	67.9	6.2	4.7	6.7	5.7	5.9	5.1	306.0	33.1	11.3	15.0	5.1	4.2
Costa Rica (1995)	107.6	42.2	2.4	2.2	10.0	8.7	3.8	2.8	75.8	15.5	13.6	12.1	2.1	0.9
Cuba (1995)	131.0	70.1	4.9	2.9	8.3	6.2	6.5	3.0	91.7	37.6	19.1	19.9	0.7	0.6
Chile (1994)	115.2	36.2	3.3	3.1	7.6	5.2	3.4	2.2	88.8	15.0	10.8	9.9	1.3	0.8
Ecuador (1995)	178.3	89.8	13.4	14.3	6.9	6.2	11.5	8.5	110.3	26.3	20.0	21.4	16.1	13.1
Guyana (1994)	148.1	100.0	17.3	11.0	3.7	2.4	14.8	4.9	76.5	34.1	34.6	45.1	1.2	2.4
Jamaica (1985)	83.3	51.3	5.8	3.8	5.4	5.7	7.8	7.7	32.3	4.2	17.9	24.1	14.0	5.7
Mexico (1994)	142.4	54.4	6.9	5.9	8.3	6.0	5.3	4.6	117.3	16.7	3.5	20.4	1.2	0.8
Panama (1989)	135.0	56.1	5.7	5.8	4.4	3.3	4.0	4.9	102.3	19.8	13.7	20.2	4.9	2.1
Paraguay (1994)	99.3	50.2	5.8	4.8	4.9	4.1	3.3	3.0	72.5	17.3	8.9	16.1	3.8	4.8
Peru (1989)	117.4	83.1	19.7	17.8	5.1	4.6	7.7	4.7	47.3	15.0	13.4	17.4	24.2	23.5
Trinidad and Tobago (1994)	122.0	83.9	5.9	2.6	7.6	8.7	0.8	9.6	77.1	27.1	28.8	34.1	1.7	1.7
Uruguay (1990)	104.6	51.6	1.6	3.7	7.7	5.0	6.5	4.5	75.4	23.5	10.1	12.8	3.2	2.1
Venezuela (1994)	251.4	65.0	7.6	7.1	8.7	6.6	7.5	5.2	208.9	25.3	17.5	20.2	1.1	0.7

**Source:** Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), *Estadísticas de salud de las Américas*, Washington, D.C., PAHO; 1995. (Publicación científica 556).  
 CELADE., *Demographic Bulletin* Nos. 60 and 62, 1998.

As can be seen in figure II.12, around 1980, death rates from accidents among males were 3 to 5 times higher than those among females. This disparity intensified later owing to a greater relative reduction in the rates among females. Between the late 1970s and the early 1990s accident death rates declined overall. The figures on mortality from external causes are also indicative of an indeterminate number of injuries that did not have fatal outcomes, but whose sequelae could be important causes of disability. The high rates of death from external causes are an indication of the prevalence of high-risk behaviours among youths, possibly linked to family or social pressures that adolescents and young people do not yet have the maturity to handle appropriately. It has been pointed out that, in addition to social factors, there are biological and ecological factors that predispose to risk behaviour, which may even transcend age and continue chronically into later stages (PAHO, 1990). These risk behaviours include tobacco use, consumption of alcoholic beverages, and use psychotropic drugs and substances. In the area of reproductive health, the risk behaviours include those that give rise to early and indiscriminate sexual activity without proper protection and those that lead to infection with sexually transmitted diseases or premature, unwanted pregnancies, which, in turn, may lead to abortion performed under unhygienic conditions and without appropriate medical care.

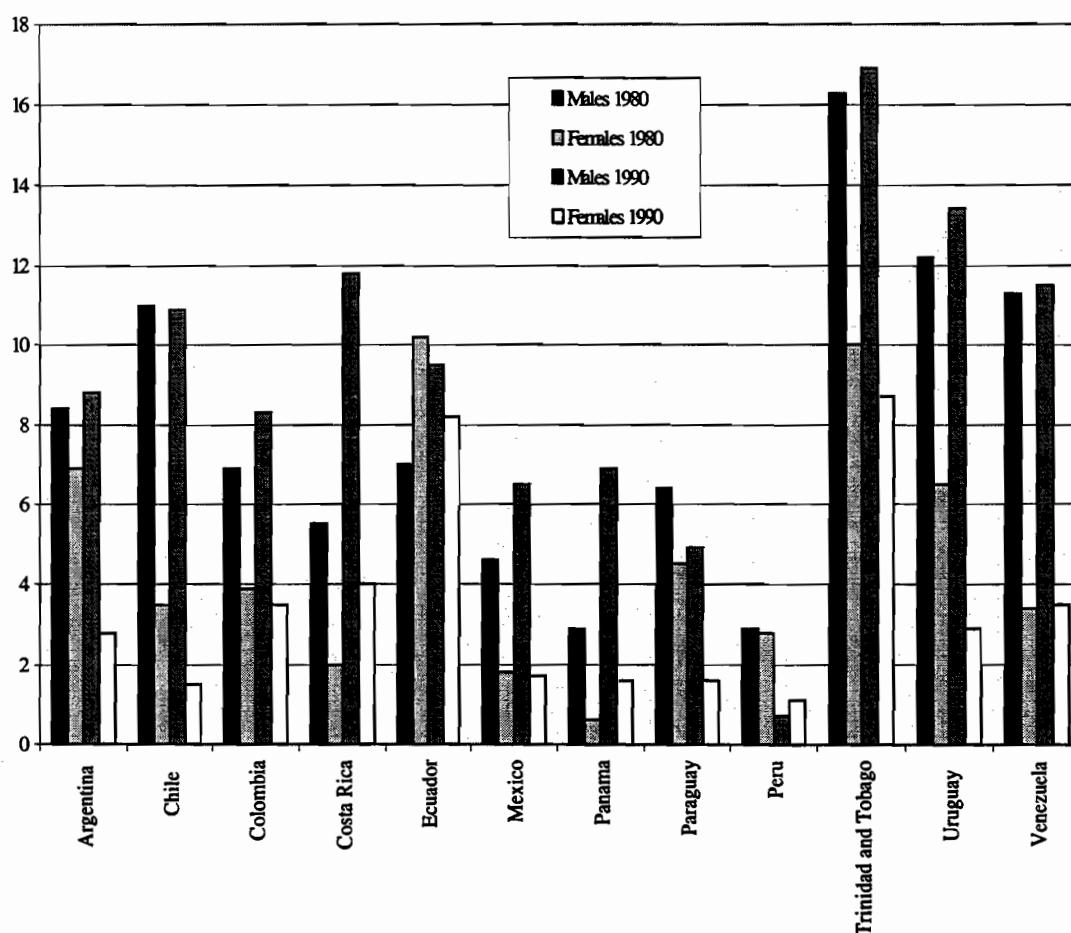
**Figure II.12**  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: MORTALITY FROM**  
**ACCIDENTS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, CIRCA 1980 AND 1990**



Source: CELADE, based on the respective Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

In addition to accidents, another important cause of death among young people is suicide, which is also considered an external cause (see figure II.13). In this case, again, the largest number of deaths occurs among males, although there are exceptions among the countries for which data are available: Ecuador is an exception in the first period and Peru, in the second. Although suicide rates are far lower than accident death rates, an upward trend in suicide deaths among young men is noted in Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Panama. Among young women, suicide rates have tended to decline or have remained stable. Cancer and heart disease are also more frequent causes of death among young men, although the rates vary from country to country.

Figure II.13  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: SUICIDE DEATHS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, CIRCA 1980 AND 1990

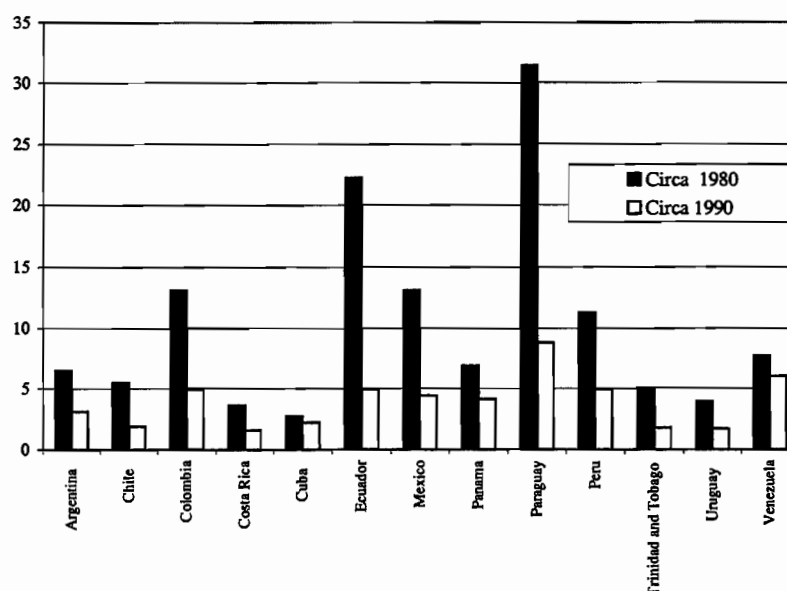


Source: CELADE, based on the respective Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

Among young women, a significant number of deaths are attributable to maternal causes associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and the puerperium, although a lack of reliable information leads to underestimation of deaths from this group of causes at all ages (see figure II.14). Nevertheless, they are among the five leading causes of death. Since deaths from these causes are often hidden behind deaths from other, more socially acceptable causes, especially in the case of adolescent girls, the information that is available serves as a warning alarm about a grave problem that is far from being controlled.

The structure of causes of death among young people points up the importance of designing and implementing activities to steer youths away from the influence of violent situations, depression, and mental disorders that affect their self-esteem and self-identification, while also ensuring attention to their prevention and treatment. From the standpoint of reproductive health, the issue of unwanted adolescent pregnancies with their sequelae of illegal abortions, calls for specific policies.

Figure II.14  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: MATERNAL MORTALITY AMONG YOUNG WOMEN, CIRCA 1980 AND 1990



Source: CELADE, based on the respective Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

## B. INTERNAL MIGRATION, URBANIZATION, AND SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION

The patterns and trends of spatial distribution, internal migration, and other mobility patterns among the youth population show some specific characteristics that make young people important actors in population distribution processes. This section presents some basic background information, followed by data that evidence the participation of young people in the changing modalities of internal migration. It also examines population distribution patterns according to major administrative divisions and the urban or rural nature of communities, and includes some reflections on intraurban residential segregation.



## 1. Some background information

Knowledge about the spatial distribution of young people is essential to an understanding of their living conditions. In various countries of the region, internal migration continues to be of crucial importance as a factor in territorial redistribution, particularly in light of the decline in fertility and the major contextual changes under way in the economic and social spheres. It is young people who are most likely—and sometimes have the greatest need—to migrate, whether to pursue their studies, improve their education, or seek better job and economic prospects than those available to them in their places of origin. Certain personal characteristics, such as sex, age, marital status (being single), and aptitude for innovation, also play a role in motivating the migration of young people and make it an important option in their life plans. Of course, only some young people migrate, and they are not the only population group that does so. Still, there is clear evidence of the existence of migratory selectivity, whose effects on the populations in the places of origin and destination can be seen, *inter alia*, in the age and sex structure and in marriage patterns and the adoption of new reproductive behaviours consonant with those prevailing in the destination locale.

Among the distinctive elements characterizing internal migratory movements are sex and age. Throughout the region, women and young people predominate in internal migratory streams, as has been apparent in the migration from rural areas to cities. The data on internal migration collected in recent decades confirm that in the type of migratory movements that are now most frequent—i.e., interurban migration—there is a continued predominance of women and young people, as reflected in the low proportion of males among the migrants to the major cities and in the high rates of growth registered in the 15-29 age group in those cities (ECLAC, 1995a; Lattes, 1996). The more diversified productive structures and higher demand for labour in the service and informal sectors in these cities appear to attract women and young people from both rural and smaller urban areas.

The productive structures in the rural environment are one factor behind the lower volumes of male emigration, which explains the habitual predominance of males in rural populations (Oberai, 1993). Rural-urban migration in Latin America has been remarkable for its impact on the growth of the urban population in the last 50 years, although the importance of this phenomenon is declining. Until around the 1970s, internal migration accounted for the bulk of population growth in the largest Latin American cities. The dynamic of rural-urban population exchange may have been responsible for up to 50% of the growth in some cities of the region (Villa and Rodríguez, 1997). Coinciding with a rising level of urbanization beginning in the mid-1970s, the influence of rural-urban migration in the total growth of the major Latin American cities began to diminish markedly, giving way to migration between and within cities as the dominant trend. Intraurban migration has been directly linked to residential relocation, especially in the major cities. It should be noted, however, that in countries that still have significant rural populations, rural-urban migration continues to be quantitatively important.

With the emergence of new socio-economic scenarios, recent years have seen a proliferation of other types of population mobility, distinct from traditional migration patterns. Hence, there is a coexistence of temporary, cyclical, periodic, and seasonal movements which do not, in a strict sense, involve a change of habitual place residence. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that many of these displacements have a rural component, whether at the origin or the destination, as a product of the extension of recreation areas, export operations, and small-scale mining, among other activities. The participation of young people in these movements appears to be significant in some respects and is related to the labour flexibility characteristic of many agricultural tasks which require the use of temporary workers.

Migration to internal frontiers (or “colonization fronts”) has emerged as a strong trend in some countries. This migration has been largely transitory, since a significant proportion of those who migrate to these areas later moves on to another. The potential for adventure that settling a new area offers has clearly influenced young people’s high degree of participation (ECLAC, 1995). It should also be noted that, in some countries, internal conflicts and natural disasters have caused massive population displacements, affecting entire families, with severe social, economic, and environmental repercussions.

The trends briefly described above are an expression of substantive changes in the contexts that shape the increasingly complex phenomenon of internal migration. It is generally acknowledged that migration constitutes a strategic and rational response to the problem of subsistence in an unstable social and economic environment (Lattes, 1996). The available evidence for many countries indicates that during the 1980s the intensity of internal migration decreased. Not much information is available about the following decade, although it is quite possible that the renewed dynamism of some medium-sized cities has made them more attractive to migrants, eclipsing or weakening the traditional appeal of the large cities—which have begun to lose their relative “hegemony”—and, at the same time, reducing the intensity of migratory flows.

The factors that influence migration seem to be undergoing significant changes, which are leading to the emergence of new patterns of migration. Underlying these changes are the liberalization and structural adjustment of economies, growing capital mobility, greater flexibility of labour markets and demand for better-qualified workers, advances in communication and transportation, changing production patterns, the boom in export activities, the use of comparative advantage, and the relocation of some industrial activities. These phenomena seem to be creating a new type of impetus for migration. In this new context, the major cities are losing their appeal as relocation destinations, changes of residence are becoming less frequent, and other patterns of mobility are gaining prominence.

Within this context, it is worth asking whether young people are experiencing distinctive mobility and distribution patterns. It is also worth reflecting on the situation of young people with regard to intraurban segregation.

## **2. Internal migration of young people: rural-urban transfer**

As noted above, until approximately 30 years ago, the expansion of the urban centres in the region, especially the major cities, was due basically to the migration of population from rural areas. This type of migration continues, though less vigorously, as is readily apparent in the nations with the lowest levels of urbanization. In the countries with high levels of urbanization, rural-to-urban migration has lessened (see table II.3).<sup>1</sup> This is the case in Chile, Venezuela, and Uruguay, where rural-urban migration contributes the least to urban growth. The exception is Nicaragua, which, in spite of having a high degree of rurality, has low levels of rural-urban migration.

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<sup>1</sup> The methodology used to determine the transfer of rural population to urban areas is based on indirect estimation, in which survival ratios were calculated by sex and five-year age groups of the total population for a period of time; these ratios were then applied to the urban population at the outset of the period. The difference between the urban population at the outset and that found at the end of the period based on the survival ratios is attributed to the rural-urban transfer of population.

Table II.3

**RELATIVE IMPORTANCE (%) OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION  
IN TOTAL URBAN GROWTH, BY SEX**  
(Percentage of urban population)

Country and period	Females	Males	% urban (year)
Argentina 1980-1991			
Bolivia 1982-1992	60.30	57.47	50.52 (85)
Brazil 1980-1990	42.74	41.21	71.02 (85)
Brazil 1990-1995	34.45	33.12	77.55 (95)
Chile 1982-1992	10.74	7.59	81.14 (85)
Costa Rica 1974-1984	42.32	36.88	43.06 (80)
Cuba 1971-1981	47.41	48.02	64.07 (75)
Dominican Republic 1983-1993			
Ecuador 1980-1990			
El Salvador 1982-1992	52.25	54.66	46.96 (85)
Guatemala 1984-1994	44.37	42.98	38.03 (90)
Haiti 1972-1982	59.22	35.03	22.15 (75)
Honduras 1978-1988	54.03	45.98	37.71 (85)
Mexico 1980-1990	33.92	33.94	68.59 (85)
Mexico 1990-1995	24.40	24.02	73.40 (95)
Nicaragua 1985-1995	31.37	28.06	52.54 (90)
Panama 1980-1990	41.10	36.10	51.74 (85)
Paraguay 1982-1992	56.72	50.42	44.91 (85)
Peru 1983-1993	35.30	32.39	66.33 (85)
Uruguay 1986-1996	32.13	36.40	90.54 (90)
Venezuela 1981-1991	24.17	21.23	81.61 (85)

Source: CELADE, indirect estimates based on census data, and *Demographic Bulletin*, No. 63, 1999.

The influx of rural population to the region's cities is greater in the case of the female population. The intensity of migration by rural young people to the cities of the countries of the region shows an inverse association with the levels of urbanization in the country (see table II.4). Thus, countries such as Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela register the lowest total net rates of rural-urban migration, whereas the least-urbanized countries have the highest rates. Bolivia and Honduras are among the countries in the latter group.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Haiti constitutes an exception. Although it has the lowest level of urbanization in the region, its net rate of rural-urban migration is low. According to indirect estimates of rural-urban movements, a loss of urban population (or exodus to rural areas) occurs among older age groups, which reduces the overall figure. However, it should be borne in mind that this methodology does not take account of international migration, which could have significant weight, especially in countries with a long tradition of emigration.

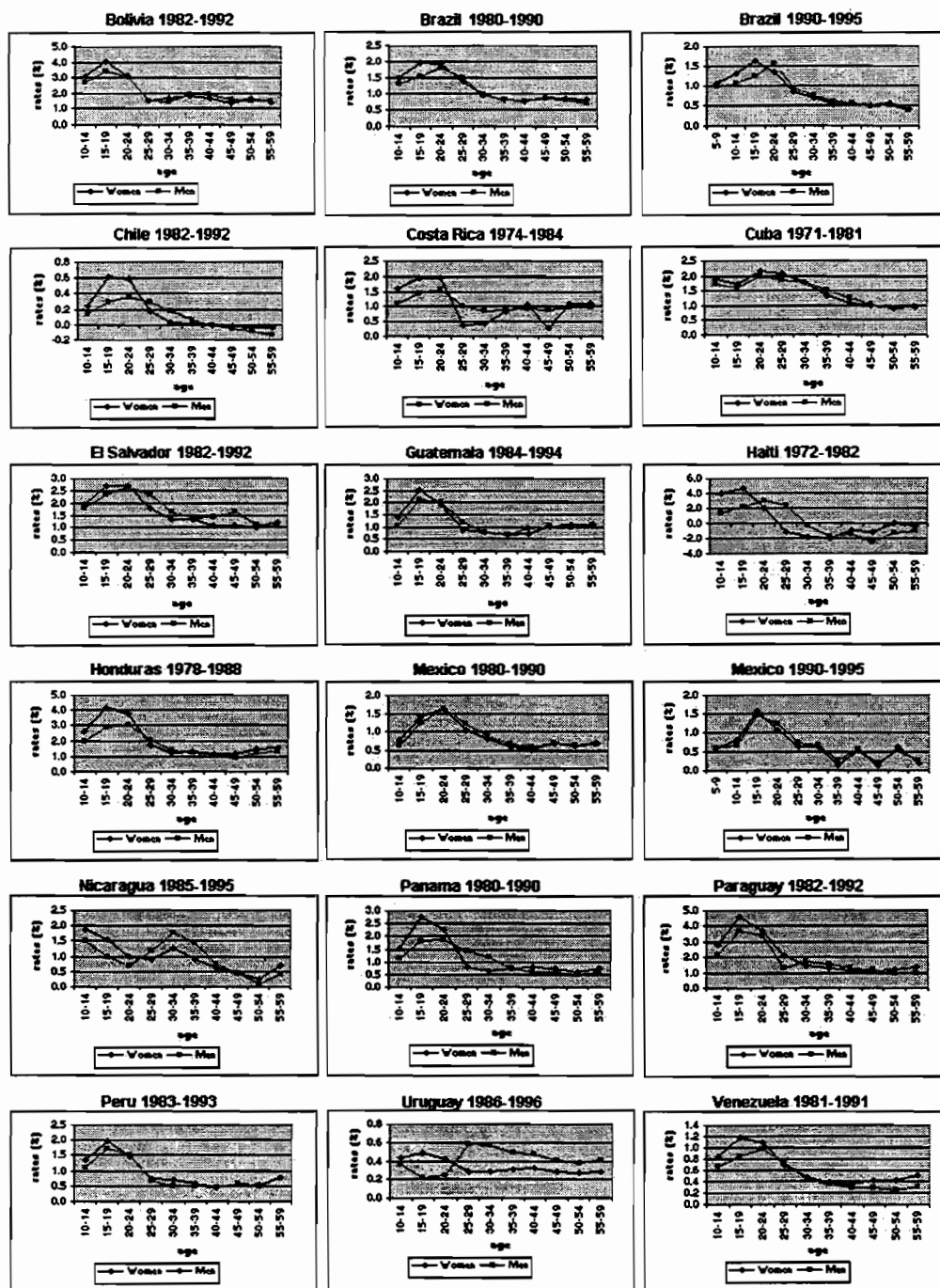
Table II.4  
**RATES OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, BY  
 AGE GROUP AND SEX**

Country and period	Rates per 100 population							
	Females				Males			
	Total	15-19	20-24	25-29	Total	15-19	20-24	25-29
Bolivia 1982-1992	2.55	4.02	3.09	1.52	2.45	3.45	3.11	1.48
Brazil 1980-1990	1.38	1.95	1.93	1.38	1.29	1.54	1.82	1.49
Brazil 1990-1995	0.97	1.63	1.34	0.86	0.94	1.24	1.58	0.94
Chile 1982-1992	0.20	0.63	0.58	0.17	0.15	0.29	0.36	0.29
Costa Rica 1974-1984	1.34	1.96	1.93	0.40	1.23	1.42	1.59	1.02
Cuba 1971-1981	1.62	1.71	2.17	2.08	1.58	1.58	1.97	1.87
Dominican Republic 1983-1993								
Ecuador 1980-1990								
El Salvador 1982-1992	1.89	2.70	2.69	1.77	1.99	2.33	2.66	2.34
Guatemala 1984-94	1.43	2.56	1.89	0.89	1.35	2.12	2.02	1.21
Haiti 1972-1982	0.84	4.63	1.99	-1.13	0.73	2.09	3.04	2.38
Honduras 1978-1988	2.65	4.21	3.79	1.74	2.23	2.84	3.05	2.07
Mexico 1980-1990	1.05	1.43	1.61	1.03	0.76	1.25	1.63	1.22
Mexico 1990-1995	0.77	1.57	1.07	0.64	0.80	1.46	1.25	0.73
Nicaragua 1985-1995	1.28	1.55	1.00	0.90	1.23	0.99	0.68	1.18
Panama 1980-1990	1.39	2.74	2.27	0.78	1.26	1.84	1.85	1.44
Paraguay 1982-1992	2.51	4.61	3.72	2.06	2.19	3.75	3.40	1.29
Peru 1983-1993	1.15	1.98	1.47	0.72	1.02	1.71	1.51	0.65
Uruguay 1986-1996	0.35	0.49	0.42	0.29	0.44	0.22	0.25	0.58
Venezuela 1981-1991	0.80	1.18	1.10	0.69	0.68	0.85	0.98	0.72

Source: CELADE, indirect estimates based on census data, and *Demographic Bulletin*, No. 63, 1999.

Another trend that bears mentioning is the decrease that occurs in net migration rates as age increases, which is of tremendous significance because it suggests that youth have been the leading participants in the process of rural-urban migration. An examination of the net migration rates by age in the various countries analysed (see figure II.15) clearly shows that it is this population group that has migrated most intensely. The greatest migration takes place among individuals aged 15-29 (and the trend is even more pronounced in the group aged 15-19), especially among young women. After age 29, the rates fall steadily, reflecting a greater degree of inertia in the population who have become "set in their ways."

**Figure II.15**  
**LATIN AMERICA: NET RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION RATES, BY SEX AND AGE, SELECTED COUNTRIES AND PERIODS**



Source: CELADE, based on census data.

The trends described above have had important repercussions on the age and sex structure of the population in the areas of origin and destination. The concrete expression of this phenomenon in the rural areas has been a loss of young people, particularly women, which leads to male:female sex ratios of well over 100 in these areas. Meanwhile, the reverse occurs in urban areas.

## 2.1 Other mobility patterns

In addition to the migration of population from rural to urban areas—which continues to be very important and has a visible impact on those societies with a high degree of rurality—there are other contexts in which migration occurs. The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) conducted in some countries of the region yield some valuable information about the movements of the youth population.<sup>3</sup> The way in which localities are distinguished in these surveys is extremely useful, in particular the distinctions between major cities, other cities, towns, and rural areas.

The information compiled by these surveys in seven countries of the region reveals the high degree of participation by young people in migration to the various spatial units identified (see table II.5). In this group of countries as a whole, young people account for 50% of internal migration. This finding further highlights the obvious participation of youth in internal movements in all localities, regardless of their size.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> It should be remembered that only women are interviewed in these surveys.

<sup>4</sup> In most of the countries examined, a circular movement of the population between towns and rural areas can be discerned: the bulk of migrants to rural areas come from towns and vice versa. This is an interesting observation, since it may be indicative of a closed relationship in which the larger urban centres do not play a part.

Table II.5

**TOTAL NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS AND PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH POPULATION, BY  
CATEGORY OF DESTINATION, SELECTED COUNTRIES AND YEARS**

Country	Major city	City	Town	Rural area	Other country	Total
<b>BOLIVIA 1996</b>						
Total immigrants	1,855	1,371	306	924	4	4,460
% youths	52.0	57.0	53.9	51.5	100.0	53.6
<b>BRAZIL 1996</b>						
Total immigrants	2,511	2,360	904	538	-	6,313
% youths	43.6	45.2	39.8	47.0	-	43.9
<b>COLOMBIA 1995</b>						
Total immigrants	3,723	1,170	632	663	-	6,188
% youths	52.7	47.8	48.4	53.8	-	51.5
<b>DOMINICAN REP. 1996</b>						
Total immigrants	1,197	1,337	138	427	1	3,100
% youths	45.0	50.3	47.1	52.7	0.0	48.5
<b>GUATEMALA 1995</b>						
Total immigrants	1,408	726	720	1,282	0	2,362
% youths	54.3	55.8	51.8	57.3	0.0	21.3
<b>NICARAGUA 1998</b>						
Total immigrants	1,107	444	2,652	1,070	10	5,283
% youths	45.8	50.5	57.4	60.1	50.0	54.9
<b>PERU 1995</b>						
Total immigrants	7,096	1,437	1,925	2,684	-	1,3118
% youths	48.4	51.8	54.8	55.5	-	51.3

Source: CELADE, based on the respective Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

Table II.6

**LATIN AMERICA, RATIO OF PERCENTAGE OF URBAN YOUTH (15-29 YEARS) TO TOTAL  
PERCENTAGE OF URBAN POPULATION, 1970-2020**

Year	% Urban youth			Total % urban population			% Urban youth/% Urban pop.		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
1970	59.5	57.6	61.5	57.4	55.9	58.9	1.04	1.03	1.04
1980	68.1	66.5	69.7	65.3	63.9	66.6	1.04	1.04	1.05
1990	73.4	72.0	74.8	71.0	69.7	72.3	1.03	1.03	1.04
2000	77.2	75.9	78.4	75.3	74.2	76.5	1.02	1.02	1.03
2010	79.6	78.5	80.8	78.4	77.3	79.5	1.02	1.02	1.02
2020	81.4	80.3	82.5	80.5	79.4	81.6	1.01	1.01	1.01

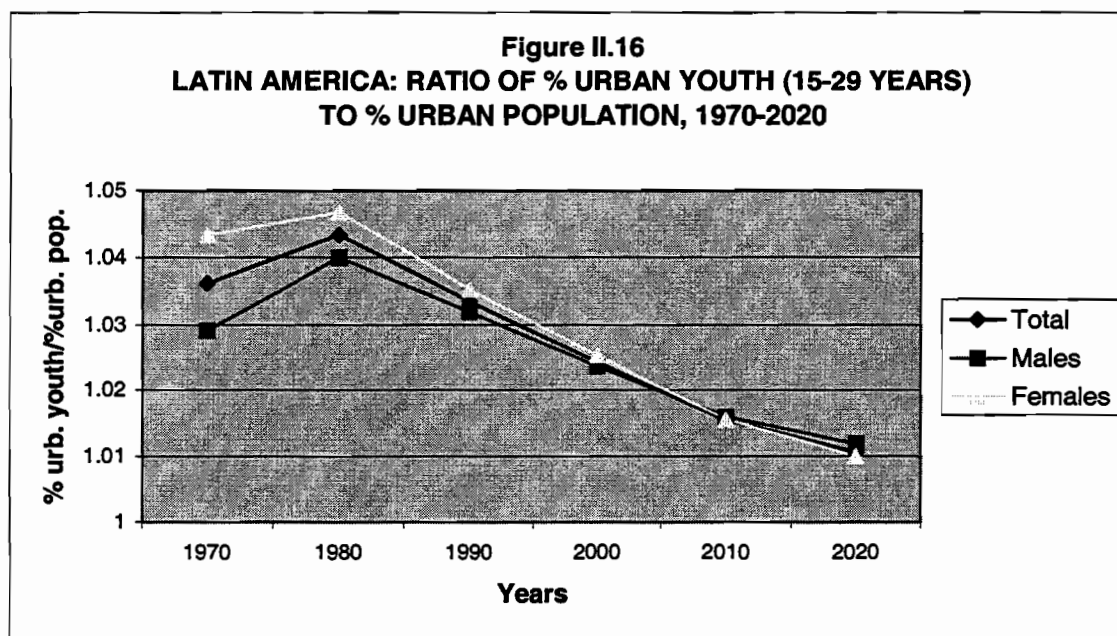
Source: CELADE/ECLAC. *Demographic Bulletin* No. 63, 1999.

### 3. Urban and rural spatial distribution

In the context of a population majority located in urban areas, the data for 20 countries in the region consistently show that, as a proportion of the total population of each country, more young people live in urban areas than in rural ones (see table II.6). This finding bears out what was mentioned above regarding the net gain of young population through rural-urban migration and also reaffirms the importance of this demographic group in migration to the other locales, as suggested by the DHS data.

The trends described above are reflected in figure II.16, which shows a greater representation of females in the cities of the region. The figure also reveals that, as the years pass, the ratio of the percentage of young urban population to total urban population will approach 1.00, probably as a result of the greater urbanization that will occur in most of the countries in the future.

It is clear that the youth of the region are concentrated in the urban centres of their respective countries. But where, exactly, are they located? Do certain places have greater concentrations of young people?



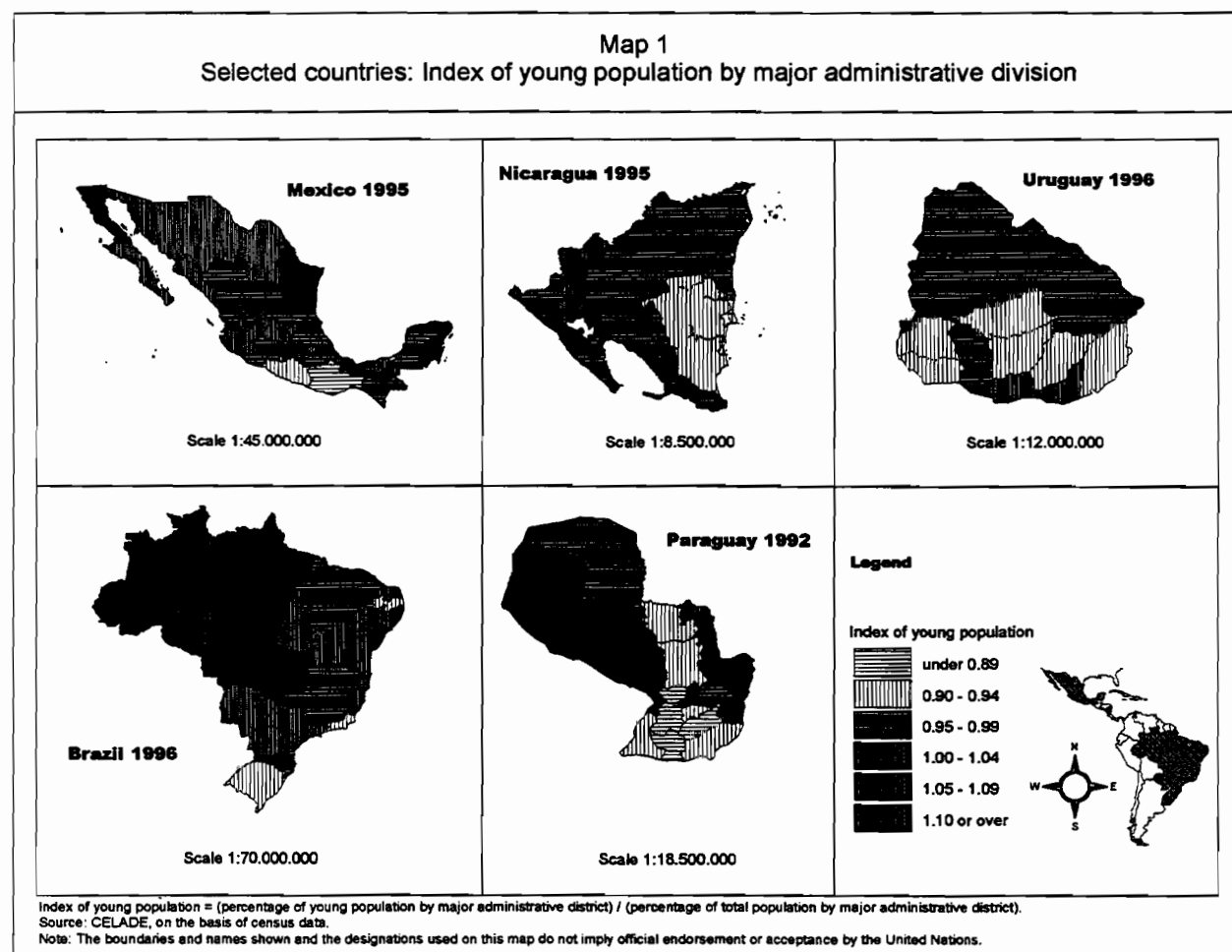
Source: CELADE/ECLAC, *Demographic Bulletin* No. 63, 1999.



### 3.1 Distribution of the youth population across major administrative divisions

Within the patterns of spatial distribution of the population, from a comparative standpoint, the distinctive characteristics of population distribution across the major administrative divisions are perhaps most significant, since they reveal historical and structural features of population processes.

The question that arises immediately is whether the youth population exhibits the same distribution patterns as the total population. A rapid analysis of the data on the distribution of these populations across the various administrative divisions points to some differences. A more precise answer to the question can be obtained by comparing the relative weight of each administrative unit with respect to the national population, both in terms of their total populations and their youth populations. This youth population index is shown on map 1 for five countries of the region: Paraguay, Nicaragua, Brazil, Mexico, and Uruguay. The first two countries are in an intermediate stage of demographic transition, with slightly less than half of their population in rural areas; the second two are in full transition, with about 70% urban population. The last country, Uruguay, is in an advanced stage of transition, with an urbanization level of over 90%.



In Paraguay, the departments of Boquerón, Canendiyu, and Alto Paraná have high concentrations of young people, which is a sign of flows of young migrants to these departments as a result of high degrees of activity in border areas, as is the case in Ciudad del Este, located in the department of Alto Paraná. Asunción also has a large proportion of youth population, as do the Central and Amambay departments, though to a lesser extent. In Nicaragua the concentration of young people is clearly in the department of Managua, where the national capital is, followed by Estelí. The percentages of young population and total population distributed in the rest of the departments is very similar.

In Brazil, the heaviest concentrations of young people are found in the Federal District, where the Brazilian capital is located, as well as in Amapá. The western region of the country holds an appeal for young people. The border states, such as Roraima, Acre, Amazonas, Rondônia, Mato Grosso, Pará, and Goiás—where new lands and regions in the country's interior are being settled—appear to be important destinations for the youth population. At the opposite extreme are the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, and Paraíba.

In Mexico, the states in the central and southern parts of the country—which have large proportions of rural and indigenous population—clearly have the lowest concentrations of youth population. The states of Oaxaca and Guerrero, for example, have very low concentrations, while states such as Quintana Roo seem to be receiving significant flows of youth migration, possibly as a result of the rapid expansion of tourism in that region (especially in Cancún). The situation is similar in the states on the northern border with the United States: Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and Nuevo León.

The youth population in Uruguay is fairly evenly distributed, although there are slightly higher indices in Montevideo, Canelones, and Maldonado. These are the departments in which both the capital and the city of Punta del Este are located and in which the country's main economic, social, and political activities are concentrated.

Clearly, in these five countries there is a definite tendency for young people to congregate in the major administrative units of their respective nations, which is related to the distribution of young people in new settlements and in the areas in which the most important national urban centres are located.

#### **4. Intraurban segregation**

The situations described above are distinctive socio-demographic expressions, and data exist, though to differing degrees, about their intensity and trends. From the perspective of territorial distribution of the population, other trends—which are increasingly apparent in the large cities, although there is less empiric evidence of this—are being manifested in the consolidation of patterns of residential segregation, especially since the crisis of the 1980s (Lattes, 1996). Although this is an old phenomenon and one that is not exclusive to Latin America and the Caribbean, it does have some specific features which, in the case of many young people, negatively affect their possibilities for entering into the mainstream of society. The literature on the structure of districts, neighbourhoods, and suburbs within cities has traditionally identified the existence of opposing forces. On one side are those who embrace segregation as positive (for the diversity and possibility of choice it offers)—mainly the well-off, who exercise their options and take decisions in regard to mobility and residential location on the basis of comfort, status, and security. They also seek to minimize distance and travel to their jobs and daily activities, all of which helps to bolster their

advantageous position in society. On the other side are those who lack such freedom of choice, since their place of residence is largely determined by socio-economic status and the vicissitudes that affect it, coupled with the behaviour of the real estate market and housing policies, largely determine where they will live.<sup>5</sup>

The neighbourhoods in which the lowest-income strata reside —which generally include a larger proportion of young people than other areas— are areas that favour the perpetuation of conditions that hinder social integration. In a context of State housing solutions guided mainly by principles of efficiency, the residential isolation that leads to segregation and the resultant social isolation seem to affect youth, especially, in numerous cities of the region. The evidence, though fragmentary, paints a troubling picture. In poor neighbourhoods it is easy to see that young people are negatively affected in terms of their independence, autonomy, and integration into society. When they form families, they are compelled —to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the country— to move in with others or sublet housing, which hardly fulfils their needs for space and intimacy, until they are able meet the savings and capital requirements established by housing programmes.

As for the neighbourhoods that are being formed, in addition to the poor quality of the environment, lack of equipment, and remoteness, the most serious problems are those found among the young people, namely: failure to complete school, low levels of qualification, and difficulty finding work, problems that exacerbate their exclusion and encourage phenomena such as the legitimation of drug addiction and acceptance of violent and criminally risky behaviours. The spread of these behaviours serves to stigmatize an appreciable segment of the youth population, reinforcing their own poor self-perception. The contextual effect of the confinement that segregation entails tends to further reinforce these attitudes, habits, and behaviours among young people, leading to their disassociation from the prevailing models of effort and success. At the same time, the solidarity and cohesiveness that often typify poor neighbourhoods are undermined by these disruptive behaviours, which end up being legitimated and sometimes generate antagonism between young people within the neighbourhood. Those young people who do manage to find work frequently do so under the same conditions as their adult neighbours —i.e., at a high personal cost in terms of the time and distance involved in their daily commute.<sup>6</sup>

### C. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

International migration is one of the most important issues on current social, economic, and political agendas and is expected to remain a priority issue for many sectors in the coming decades. The impetus provided by some of the visible effects of economic and cultural globalization, which has translated into growing ease of communication and transportation, appears to be creating a situation that encourages international mobility. However, the information available at present, which is fragmentary and is derived

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<sup>5</sup> In numerous cities of the region, poor families living in wealthy neighbourhoods have been virtually banished to peripheral areas. In some cases, the characteristics of the real estate market and the physical expansion of the large cities have also pushed middle-class families into the periphery, giving rise to a new and complex form of segregation (Villa y Rodríguez, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Several studies in the region confirm this. For example, in Bogotá intraurban mobility is characterized by a high degree of socio-spatial segregation, in which daily commutes to work are highly regressive in nature —i.e., commuting time and distance to and from work increase as income falls. Living and working in the same part of the city is a privilege reserved almost exclusively to the wealthiest segments of the population (Cuervo, 1995). These findings can be generalized to all the major Latin American cities.

fundamentally from census data, concerns only one type of mobility (changes of habitual residence). This is an issue with multiple dimensions, including undocumented migration, transfer and use of remittances, traffic in migrants, family reunification, the human rights of migrants, the labour aspects of the migration, the vulnerability of some populations, migratory policies, the role of migration in multidimensional integration schemes, the issue of refugees, and the new patterns of mobility. In this context, the participation of young people may be significant, but with special features that distinguish it from other segments, such as those that make up the labour force proper.

This section presents some theoretical background on international migration of young people and describes migratory patterns within the region and to the United States, noting specific quantitative and qualitative features and also examining the significance of these patterns.

### **1. Frame of reference**

Young people's participation in international migration has special features which stem, essentially, from their particular stage in life. Depending on their socio-economic characteristics and individual attributes—as well as on the context of their places of origin and destination—migration may place young people in a socially disadvantaged position or it may help them to develop assets that will enable them to become important and dynamic actors in society. In the first case, migration may serve as an escape valve that provides a way out of the adverse circumstances in which they live. In the second case, their countries of origin lose valuable human resources while the destination countries gain them. Thus, young people's participation in international migration may have a decisive impact in both quantitative and qualitative terms. To assess the quantitative aspect, it is necessary to determine the relative weight that young people have in migratory streams. A basic hypothesis suggests that they are a significant presence in movements between neighbouring countries. As for the quantitative impact, a combination of factors is involved, including significant participation in labour markets and educational systems, with specific features determined by gender and the spatial context in which international migration takes place.

Beyond the most well-known theoretical views on the general determinants of international migration—which emphasize the voluntary character of the migrant as a social actor and tend to focus on economic factors (Sutcliffe, 1998)—among young people the determinants have special qualities, since migration is not always motivated by an autonomous decision and, even when it is, the decision is related to the need to achieve success or goals in various spheres. The migration of young people appears to be prompted by the expectation of improving their living conditions, an aspiration which, though not exclusive to young people, is more clearly expressed, owing to the particular characteristics of their time of life. Of course, living conditions and expectations differ widely among young people, and the decision to migrate will depend on access to information about their regions of origin and destination, as well as on their personal experience. When the decision is motivated by a desire for advancement, youth migration to the developed countries—or to countries that are more developed than their own—is influenced by the penetration of cultural patterns from those countries and by young people's comparative assessments, as well as by the real and perceived possibilities for social integration and mobility or attainment of educational objectives in the host country (Rodríguez and Dabezies, 1991). The foregoing would explain their migratory propensity—i.e., the existence of migration as a potential option (see box II.1).

**Box II.1**  
**URUGUAY: MIGRATORY PROPENSITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE**  
**IN THE LATE 1980s**

Uruguay has one of the longest traditions of migration of all the countries in Latin America. The impact of these migratory movements has been felt acutely because the country's population is relatively small. In the context of the serious economic, political, and social problems that have afflicted Uruguayan society since the 1960s, various studies have confirmed the existence of large-scale emigration, mainly to Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela. Many of those who have chosen to emigrate have been highly qualified individuals, and this situation has persisted despite the decrease in the intensity of emigration since the 1980s and the economic recovery and restoration of democracy in the country. A study based on the National Youth Survey, conducted by the National Statistics and Census Department between 1989 and 1990, included a special module with questions aimed at gathering information on the migratory history of young people and their families in order to ascertain their views on the possibility of emigrating.

The propensity to emigrate, particularly among Uruguayan young people, was an important issue on the political agenda, especially in the late-1980s. A premise underlying the study was that migration among young people was clearly a feasible option in the collective imagination. The background data compiled by the survey led to the conclusion that young people's decision to emigrate was motivated more by tensions generated as a result of unmet expectations than by acute economic need. Those who were most likely to emigrate were young people in the middle and upper income strata and those who had achieved the highest educational levels, who were obviously sceptical about the opportunities available to them in their country and critical of the worldview of their parents' generation and adults in general. The study also found that propensity to migrate was influenced by the migratory history of the young people and their families. A family history of living in another country and a greater possibility of establishing ties abroad served to allay fears about emigration, as did the identification of incentives in the labour sphere, such as the possibility of promotion and greater recognition. The most striking finding was that one out of four young people were willing to emigrate, even temporarily, to another country. When asked why, many gave abstract and general responses, such as "There's no future here," and "There's more opportunity abroad," which pointed up the need for an in-depth analysis of this widespread social phenomenon.

The study attached great importance to addressing the views of young people through labour-related measures, whether through generation of employment or incentives for advancement at work. It concluded that their migratory propensity should not necessarily be seen as negative, since the experience of confronting labour and training issues in another environment could serve as a revitalizing element in Uruguayan society. However, it also concluded that the permanent loss of highly enterprising people should not be allowed to continue and that it was therefore necessary to design policies aimed at retaining human resources, which was considered a formidable challenge.

**Source:** Based on IOM/ INJU/ ECLAC, *La propensión migratoria de los jóvenes uruguayos*. Montevideo, 1994.

The specific determinants of international migration among young people have to do with the drive to succeed and the possibilities for doing so in terms of their relationship with the world of work (ability to gain entry to the labour market, economic need), education (greater aspirations, need to pursue studies), and family and personal history (inclination toward change and nonconformism, unmet expectations). The migratory process need not be a negative event for young people and societies, but it may entail risk for them and be undesirable for societies, which may be deprived of their most enterprising and dynamic members.

## **2. Some empirical evidence**

Three major migratory patterns coexist in Latin America and the Caribbean: immigration from abroad, intraregional migration, and extraregional emigration, mainly to the United States. In the case of the first, there has been a pronounced upward trend in the age of the immigrants, who are primarily of European origin. As for the other two patterns, the situation is different and much more dynamic. The general information available reveals that the socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics of the migrants vary widely, as reflected by their differing levels of education and qualification, economic participation, and gender distinctions, as well as the geographic specificities of the migration (ECLAC-CELADE, 1999b and 1999c).

### **2.1 Intraregional migration**

There was a strong surge in intraregional migration during the 1970s, and by around 1980 the volume of migrants had doubled. During the following decade this trend diminished, possibly as a result of the disturbances associated with the economic crisis and subsequent structural reform programs, as well as the restoration of peace and democracy in several nations (ECLAC-CELADE, 1999b). A distinctive feature of this pattern is the presence of numerous sending countries but very few receiving countries (Argentina and Venezuela) and the fact that most of the migration takes place between neighbouring countries, a situation that has continued for several decades.

The systematized data from the CELADE study of international migration in Latin America (the IMILA project),<sup>7</sup> which are for years prior to the early-1990s, yield an approximate and comparative overview of the trends and basic characteristics of international migration by young people between countries of Latin America. Around 1980, almost 335,000 young people resided in countries of the region other than those of their birth, representing around 17% of all of intraregional migrants. By around 1990, the number was over 350,000, equivalent to 16% of all intraregional migrants. These percentages are lower than the percentage of young people aged 15-24 in the total population of Latin America, and there is wide variation in the percentages of migrants by country. The maintenance of the general features of intraregional migration of young people, coupled with a decrease in the migrant stocks in the principal receiving countries, would appear to point to an incipient diversification in migratory destinations, as well as the return of children born abroad and a decided reduction in the intensity of migration during the 1980s, a fact which was already apparent in overall intraregional migration (ECLAC-CELADE, 1999b).

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<sup>7</sup> The information concerns stocks of migrants and comes from national population censuses. This section refers to young people aged 15-24, although the data on the characterization of intraregional migrants are for the group aged 15-29.

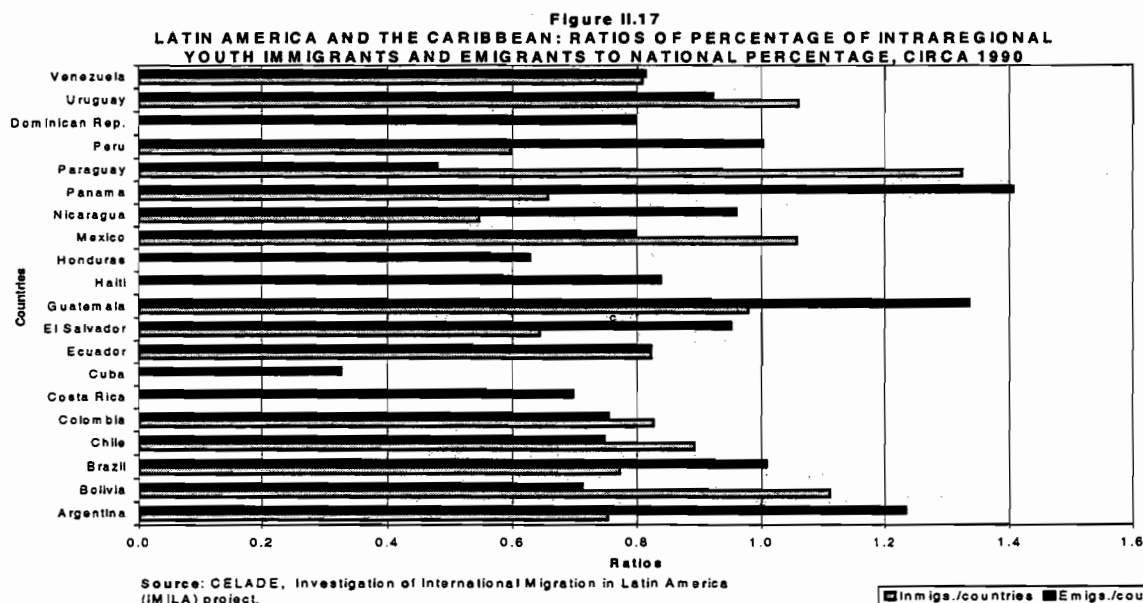
Although in absolute numbers movements between countries that share borders account for the largest volume of youth migrants (see table II.7), their relative weight in total migrant stocks is not among the highest, which tends to cast doubt on the hypothesis of greater youth participation in intraregional migration. Moreover, quantitative dominance, which takes place when the percentage of youth migrants is greater than the percentage of all migrants in a national population, appears to occur in only a handful of cases. Figure II.17 shows that, around 1990, youths were overrepresented among emigrants and immigrants in very few countries.

**Table II.7**  
**LATIN AMERICA: YOUNG PEOPLE BORN IN LATIN AMERICA AND COUNTED IN COUNTRIES OTHER THAN THEIR COUNTRY OF BIRTH, C/IRCA 1990 (AGED 15-24)**

Country of location	Year	Country of birth																			Total	
		Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Cuba	Ecuador	El Salvador	Guatemala	Haiti	Honduras	Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Rep. Dominicana	Uruguay		Venezuela
Argentina	1991	19864	2044	28566	498	78	33	122	18	44	...	2	320	7	98	21818	4493	66	19832	335	98238	
Bolivia	1992	4476	1708	801	57	17	14	39	4	21	1	83	1226	10	19	73	1428	1	45	62	10085	
Brazil	1991	3197	2388	3892	231	22	31	68	46	23	52	29	115	23	360	3177	833	21	2666	203	17377	
Chile	1992	5605	1075	702	255	118	80	483	58	41	4	44	233	33	76	98	1593	27	202	360	11087	
Colombia	1993	209	37	229	160	81	40	1317	28	63	7	36	218	68	301	11	660	9	23	7926	11423	
Costa Rica																						
Cuba																						
Ecuador	1990	171	67	106	751	7023	60	36	31	18	5	19	101	33	93	11	462	19	45	274	9325	
El Salvador	1992	11	5	14	20	25	141	...	10	826	...	849	171	400	51	6	11	5	5	17	2567	
Guatemala	1994	36	18	19	26	54	97	8	19	3131		885	515	983	54		37	18	13	15	5928	
Haiti																						
Honduras	1988																				...	
Mexico	1990	626	390	171	442	792	211	113	157	1024	12661	93	489	456	904	21	691	54	175	223	19693	
Nicaragua	1995	21	3	20	13	28	566	49	4	318	100	6	852	142	45	1	26	7	...	17	2218	
Panama	1990	60	35	92	131	1594	470	422	83	378	61	17	104	258	790	4	276	237	25	72	5109	
Paraguay	1992	12676	169	27457	381	39	7	...	13	7	11	9	6	997	3	11	241	...	474	20	42521	
Peru	1993	519	413	377	304	372	49	35	233	12	19	1	10	114	33	42	19	18	30	215	2815	
Rep. Dominicana	1993																				...	
Uruguay	1995	5849	67	1743	202	55	16	85	50	5	5	...	2	145	9	16	170	111	12	298	8840	
Venezuela	1990	1387	232	543	4096	82979	136	633	4326	158	93	188	42	384	278	150	41	4762	2897	901	104226	
Total		34843	24763	35225	39785	94002	2069	1579	6924	5218	13986	383	3452	4939	3126	2220	25450	15624	3391	24436	10037	351452

Source: CELADE, Investigation of International Migration in Latin America (IMILA) project.





These findings make it possible to conclude that young people are seldom dominant in quantitative terms in intraregional migratory movements, even in migration between neighbouring countries. The decrease in the percentage of young people out of total intraregional migrants registered in the 1980 and 1990 censuses is not related to the evolution of the percentage of young people in national populations, which has remained the same. In addition, the trends are heterogeneous. While youths do not appear to dominate quantitatively in intraregional migratory streams, the qualitative aspects of this migration may be more significant,<sup>8</sup> and it may therefore be useful to examine some of the socio-economic characteristics of immigrants and emigrants.

Table II.8 shows that a majority of the immigrants to the three countries that have traditionally been the greatest recipients are female, which is seen consistently when the origin of the immigrants is considered on both census dates. Is the search for employment alternatives the driving force behind this youth migration? In Argentina, more than 50% of all young women immigrants were economically active in 1990, and in Venezuela this proportion was over 40%. In both cases, as is habitually the case, women's participation was less than that of men. It should be pointed out that in 1990 the overall economic participation of young women was 48% in Argentina and 34% in Venezuela (ECLAC-CELADE, 1999d), which suggests that employment considerations —as a source of greater opportunities— are an important impetus for migration, although it is also important to note that migration does not always take place

<sup>8</sup> In other forms of migration, it is probable that young people participate much more actively and show high degrees of innovation, enterprise, and dynamism. For example, it can be hypothesized that the tendency to migrate will increase with the development of a regional market for higher education, whose expansion will be facilitated by the growing availability of electronic communications media. The data analysed here provide only a partial picture, limited to the decades of the 1970s and 1980s.

autonomously and that these data reflect a result achieved after the migration occurred. Nevertheless, there is a significant proportion of women who are not economically active and who are therefore, presumably, either students or homemakers. The information from the IMILA project database indicates that in these countries the percentage of students is greater among immigrants who do not come from neighbouring countries, which would seem to indicate that education is not a primary motive for women's migration between contiguous countries.

**Table II.8**  
**LATIN AMERICA: SOME SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF IMMIGRANTS IN**  
**ARGENTINA, PARAGUAY AND VENEZUELA, CIRCA 1980 AND 1990**  
*(Population aged 15-29)*

Country and origin of immigrants	% singles			% economically active			% with 10 or more years of schooling			Sex ratio
	Men	Women	Both sexes	Men	Women	Both sexes	Men	Women	Both sexes	
<b>Argentina 1980</b>										
Bolivians	55.8	39.0	47.7	87.1	31.3	60.2	22.4	20.2	21.3	107.5
Chileans	56.1	36.2	45.7	88.8	30.2	58.3	22.1	23.7	23.0	92.1
Paraguayans	59.5	41.6	49.1	88.9	41.0	60.9	17.5	17.4	17.4	71.4
Uruguayans	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Rest of region	66.1	42.3	54.2	72.0	29.4	50.7	49.4	38.8	44.1	99.9
Total region	58.0	39.4	48.0	87.1	35.0	59.1	22.6	21.4	22.0	86.3
<b>Argentina 1991</b>										
Bolivians	58.3	42.3	50.2	85.4	49.9	67.3	34.6	30.7	32.6	96.0
Chileans	58.2	41.4	49.8	85.6	47.2	66.4	35.9	39.9	37.9	100.3
Paraguayans	50.9	36.2	41.9	90.1	56.3	69.3	31.5	29.7	30.4	62.7
Uruguayans	59.1	46.1	52.4	86.4	51.3	68.4	44.8	51.2	48.1	94.9
Rest of region	75.6	55.1	65.1	64.2	50.1	57.0	72.8	69.7	71.2	95.2
Total region	58.3	42.0	49.6	84.9	51.3	66.9	39.6	39.6	39.6	87.4
<b>Paraguay 1982</b>										
Argentiniens	64.1	46.4	54.5	80.5	22.4	48.9	24.1	24.5	24.3	83.4
Brazilians	60.9	32.7	46.8	95.8	13.9	56.5	3.2	3.8	3.5	99.5
Rest of region	57.4	47.8	52.6	81.8	17.2	50.7	37.9	35.0	36.5	100.5
Total region	61.3	36.6	48.7	92.1	16.1	54.6	9.1	10.3	9.7	95.9
<b>Paraguay 1992</b>										
Argentiniens	76.8	63.9	70.0	67.2	32.4	48.8	38.7	41.9	40.4	89.6
Brazilians	55.6	29.2	42.7	94.6	14.3	55.2	5.2	6.1	5.7	104.0
Rest of region	61.4	53.8	57.7	79.1	65.4	72.4	45.4	47.1	46.2	103.2
Total region	61.3	40.3	50.8	86.8	22.4	54.6	16.1	18.5	17.3	99.9
<b>Venezuela 1981</b>										
Colombians	58.3	41.3	49.2	86.2	45.2	64.2	16.4	15.8	16.1	86.7
Rest of region	53.4	43.3	48.1	78.1	49.9	63.3	49.1	43.9	46.4	91.2
Total region	57.4	41.6	49.0	84.8	46.0	64.1	21.9	20.3	21.1	87.5
<b>Venezuela 1990</b>										
Colombians	62.1	41.7	51.5	85.1	42.3	62.9	22.5	25.1	23.9	92.6
Rest of region	70.2	58.0	64.0	65.9	42.5	53.9	58.1	57.2	57.6	95.7
Total region	63.6	44.6	53.8	81.5	42.3	61.2	29.1	31.1	30.2	93.1

Source CELADE, Investigation of International Migration in Latin America (IMILA) project.

Table II.9 shows that fewer female migrants are single than is the case with male migrants, especially among migrant stocks from neighbouring countries, indicating that more female migrants have apparently assumed adult obligations, which normally —and this is borne out by these cases— are incompatible with the pursuit of studies. Finally, the data indicate that young people with higher educational levels make up a sizeable proportion, but not a majority, of intraregional migrants stocks.

**Table II.9**  
**LATIN AMERICA: SOME SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF**  
**BRAZILIAN, CHILEAN AND COLOMBIAN EMIGRANTS, CIRCA 1980 AND 1990**  
*(15-29 year olds)*

Country and destination: Emigrants	% unmarried			% economically active			% with 10 years or more of schooling			Sex ratio
	Men	Women	Both sexes	Men	Women	Both sexes	Men	Women	Both sexes	
Brazilian circa 1980										
Argentina	55.8	32.4	42.6	84.5	23.8	51.4	14.0	19.4	17.1	77.7
Paraguay	60.9	35.9	49.0	95.2	13.9	56.4	3.2	3.8	3.5	109.2
Rest of region	65.6	34.8	49.5	78.8	22.8	49.6	28.2	35.4	31.9	92.2
Total region	61.0	35.2	48.2	91.8	17.0	54.7	7.8	10.8	9.3	101.8
Brazilian circa 1990										
Argentina	56.4	29.6	40.3	83.7	53.4	65.5	30.2	41.0	36.7	65.8
Paraguay	55.6	29.2	42.7	94.6	14.3	55.2	5.2	6.1	5.7	104.0
Rest of region	69.6	42.8	55.0	65.7	31.4	47.1	37.7	44.8	41.6	83.8
Total region	57.8	31.6	44.5	89.5	21.0	54.7	11.7	16.2	14.0	96.8
Chilean circa 1980										
Argentina	56.1	36.2	45.7	88.8	30.2	58.3	22.1	23.7	23.0	92.0
Venezuela	59.8	47.0	53.1	65.8	39.6	52.1	63.6	61.2	62.3	91.8
Rest of region	55.6	40.3	48.5	71.6	25.9	51.0	72.0	69.8	72.3	115.1
Total region	53.6	39.8	46.6	83.8	30.5	56.6	34.2	33.3	33.9	99.4
Chilean circa 1990										
Argentina	58.2	41.4	49.8	85.6	47.2	66.4	35.9	39.9	37.9	100.3
Venezuela	79.5	71.7	75.7	52.6	36.4	44.6	76.6	74.0	75.3	103.8
Rest of region	72.3	65.5	69.1	58.6	38.5	49.1	73.3	71.5	72.5	111.7
Total region	62.5	47.8	55.2	78.0	44.9	61.6	46.0	47.9	46.9	102.4
Colombians circa 1980										
Venezuela	58.3	41.3	49.2	86.2	45.2	64.2	16.4	15.8	16.1	86.7
Rest of region	64.5	42.5	52.5	52.6	36.4	44.6	26.4	24.9	25.6	83.0
Total region	58.7	41.4	49.4	85.1	45.0	63.7	17.1	16.5	16.8	86.4
Colombians circa 1990										
Venezuela	62.1	41.7	51.5	85.1	42.3	62.9	22.5	25.1	23.9	92.6
Rest of region	62.6	45.0	52.8	66.2	30.4	46.3	37.5	37.9	37.9	79.7
Total region	62.2	42.1	51.6	83.1	40.9	61.0	24.1	25.4	25.4	91.0

Source: CELADE, Investigation of International Migration in Latin America (IMILA) project.

The foregoing information reveals that some groups of youth migrants have opportunities for enterprise and advancement, especially those who migrate from non-neighbouring countries, but also, in general, women who are economically active, single, and well-educated. On the other hand, there is a substantial proportion of migrants, mainly women from bordering countries, who are in a situation of disadvantage, since their non-working status, domestic responsibilities, and low educational levels limit their possibilities for taking part in adequately remunerated productive activities and will hinder them from realizing some of their aspirations for the long term.

With regard to emigration, the large numbers of young people who emigrate from Brazil, Chile, and Colombia is noteworthy. Although most of the observations concerning immigrants are also applicable to emigrants, the latter do have some specific characteristics. Table II.9 reveals a lesser female predominance among emigrants. For example, a larger proportion of young Chileans who emigrate are male. Emigrants also have differing levels of education according to their countries of origin. This situation reveals the influence of the national context of origin, which acts in conjunction with the greater or lesser demands of the structure of opportunities and the institutional and socio-economic frameworks in the destination countries. What is the situation among emigrant women, given the considerations noted above? Their economic participation varies according to country of origin. It is quite low in the case of Brazilian women emigrants (even lower than the level registered among young women within Brazil, which is about 50%). In the case of women emigrants from Chile and Colombia, their rates of participation are closer to the rates registered in their respective countries (ECLAC-CELADE, 1999d). Women who do not live with a partner make up a larger proportion of the latter groups, and this proportion increases when the emigration does not take place between neighbouring countries. Although emigrants who go to non-neighbouring countries generally have higher levels of education, this fact is not reflected in a higher degree of success in the labour market, which underscores the vulnerability of young migrants with low educational levels who migrate between nations that share borders. In any case, women from the principal emigrant countries share some of the traits described above for immigrants—for example, greater responsibility for domestic functions.

## 2.2 Emigration to the United States

For several decades, extraregional emigration has shown a clear upward trend, with a clear preference for the United States as a destination.<sup>9</sup> This country holds enormous appeal for migrants from some countries in the region, as is evidenced by the magnitude of migration from Mexico, Cuba, the Caribbean, and Central America. At the root of this phenomenon are, on the one hand, the profound differences in levels of development and socio-political stability between the United States and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean; on the other hand is the existence of communities of immigrants in the United States whose viability is reinforced through social networks that ensure continued migration and serve to perpetuate migratory patterns.

What part do young people play in this emigration? According to the United States censuses of 1980 and 1990 (see table II.10), the stock of young migrants born in other countries of the region totalled around 900,000 and 1.6 million, respectively, which was equal to 22% and 20%, respectively, of the total number of immigrants from the region. Estimates from the Current Population Survey for 1997, published on the Web page of the US Census Bureau ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)), confirm a downward trend in the relative proportion of young people (see table II.9).

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<sup>9</sup> Emigration to Canada, Europe, and Oceania occurs to lesser extent, although there is some evidence of increased diversification in extraregional emigration.

**Table II.10**  
**UNITED STATES: POPULATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE BORN IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN**  
**COUNTRIES, BY REGION OF BIRTH, AGE GROUPS AND SEX,**  
**1980 AND 1990 CENSUSES**

Region of birth	1980				1990			
	Men	Women	Both sexes	Sex ratio (per hundred)	Men	Women	Both sexes	Sex ratio (per hundred)
<b>Total region</b>								
15-19	202303	180278	382581	112.2	342429	276752	619181	123.7
20-24	279521	240307	519828	116.3	586535	428360	1E+06	136.9
Total young people	481824	420585	902409	114.6	928964	705112	2E+06	131.7
Total population	2159219	2031422	4190641	106.3	4244092	3967660	8E+06	107.0
% young people/total	22.3	20.7	21.5		21.9	17.8	19.9	
<b>Latin America</b>								
15-19	189943	167107	357050	113.7	315626	250671	566297	125.9
20-24	262651	221412	484063	118.6	553585	391306	944891	141.5
Total young people	452594	388519	841113	116.5	869211	641977	2E+06	135.4
Total population	1990266	1890225	3880491	105.3	4905031	2557897	7E+06	191.8
% young people/total	22.7	20.6	21.7		17.7	25.1	20.2	
<b>South America</b>								
15-19	19873	18381	38254	108.1	20005	17925	37930	111.6
20-24	25810	25481	51291	101.3	35521	31969	67490	111.1
Total young people	45683	43862	89545	104.2	55526	49894	105420	111.3
Total population	225123	227908	453031	98.8	382637	406552	789189	94.1
% young people/total	20.3	19.2	19.8		14.5	12.3	13.4	
<b>Meso-America</b>								
15-19	132230	111331	243561	118.8	268296	203982	472278	131.5
20-24	199522	157719	357241	126.5	478261	317271	795532	150.7
Total young people	331752	269050	600802	123.3	746557	521253	1E+06	143.2
Total population	1300684	1229756	2530440	105.8	2895529	2467988	5E+06	117.3
% young people/total	25.5	21.9	23.7		25.8	21.1	23.6	
<b>Caribbean and others</b>								
15-19	50209	50566	100775	99.3	54128	54845	108973	98.7
20-24	54189	57107	111296	94.9	72753	79120	151873	92.0
Total young people	104398	107673	212071	97.0	126881	133965	260846	94.7
Total population	633412	573758	1207170	110.4	965926	1093120	2E+06	88.4
% young people/total	16.5	18.8	17.6		13.1	12.3	12.7	

Source: CELADE, Investigation of International Migration in Latin America (IMILA) project.

Consistent with emigration patterns for the total population of the region, and according to the sources mentioned above, the majority of these emigrants are male, as can be seen in tables II.11 and II.12. Generally speaking, there has not been a feminization of the international migration of young people from Latin American and Caribbean to the United States, as has been noted in other studies (ECLAC-CELADE, 1999c). Like the composition of regional migratory flows to the United States, the quantitative participation of young people in overall migration and the sex distribution of migrant groups show a heterogeneous pattern, although this occurs in the framework of a clear-cut trend toward less relative participation by this age group.

Figures II.18 to II.23 show that Mexico and the countries of Central America —the countries with the most emigration to the United States— account for the largest relative proportions of young migrants; young men constitute more than 20% of the migrant population and young women were approaching that percentage around 1997. The situation is different among young people from South America and the Caribbean, who make up less than 15% of the migrant population, with a downward trend. The factors that are most directly associated with the greater participation of some groups in both percentage and absolute terms are, in the case of Mexican youths, the fact that Mexico shares a border and has historical and cultural ties with the United States, in addition to the existence of migratory patterns that favour family reunification and strongly interdependent labour markets. In the case of Central American youths, emigration is linked to the serious conflicts of the 1980s in several countries and the severe and persistent social and economic problems caused by structural inadequacies in national development processes (ECLAC-CELADE, 1999c). However, with the restoration of peace, fewer young people are choosing to emigrate.

**Table II.11**  
**UNITED STATES: POPULATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE BORN IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN**  
**COUNTRIES, BY REGION OF BIRTH, AGE GROUP AND SEX.**  
**PERIODIC POPULATION SURVEY, 1997**  
*(Estimated in thousands)*

Region of birth	Men	Women	Both sexes	Sex ratio (per hundred)
<b>Total region</b>				
15-19	501	388	889	129.1
20-24	834	561	1395	148.7
Total young people	1335	949	2284	140.7
Total population	6870	6206	13076	110.7
% young people/total	19.4	15.3	17.5	
<b>South America</b>				
15-19	49	35	84	140.0
20-24	52	49	101	106.1
Total young people	101	84	185	120.2
Total population	748	782	1530	95.7
% young people/total	13.5	10.7	12.1	
<b>Central America</b>				
15-19	64	70	134	91.4
20-24	124	80	204	155.0
Total young people	188	150	338	125.3
Total population	861	890	1751	96.7
% young people/total	21.8	16.9	19.3	
<b>Mexico</b>				
15-19	297	221	518	134.4
20-24	563	341	904	165.1
Total young people	860	562	1422	153.0
Total population	3924	3093	7017	126.9
% young people/total	21.9	18.2	20.3	
<b>The Caribbean</b>				
15-19	91	62	153	146.8
20-24	95	91	186	104.4
Total young people	186	153	339	121.6
Total population	1337	1441	2778	92.8
% young people/total	13.9	10.6	12.2	

**Source:** Periodic population survey, 1997 ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)).

**Table II.12**  
**UNITED STATES: SOME EDUCATIONAL FEATURES OF THE YOUTH POPULATION**  
**BORN IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES BY REGION OF BIRTH,**  
**1990 CENSUS**

*(Population aged 18-24 years)*

Features	Region and country of birth				
	Total region	Latin America	South America	Meso-America	Caribbean and others
<b>Level of education attained from secondary education</b>					
Complete or secondary education	287674	256442	26734	201270	59670
Some university or higher level of studies	221136	188225	29957	127394	63785
University or higher qualification	32250	25864	6076	14437	11737
Total all levels	541060	470531	62767	343101	135192
Attending some establishment	390381	341959	40319	254649	95413
Attendance rate	72.2	72.7	64.2	74.2	70.6
Number that entered the country before 1980	329759	298530	25806	237891	66062
Percentage that entered before 1980	60.9	63.4	41.1	69.3	48.9
<b>Total 18-24</b>	<b>1317162</b>	<b>1223063</b>	<b>84694</b>	<b>1032118</b>	<b>200350</b>
<b>Percentage over levels attained</b>	<b>41.1</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>74.1</b>	<b>33.2</b>	<b>67.5</b>

**Source:** CELADE, Investigation of International Migration in Latin America (IMILA) project.



Figure I.18  
UNITED STATES: YOUNG PEOPLE AS A PERCENTAGE OF OVERALL POPULATION BORN IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, BY REGION OF ORIGIN, 1980

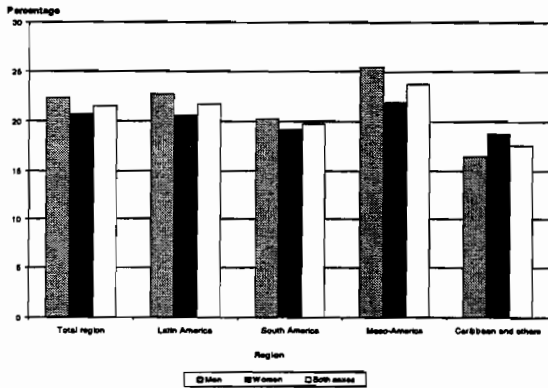


Figure I.19  
UNITED STATES: YOUNG PEOPLE AS A PERCENTAGE OF OVERALL POPULATION BORN IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, BY REGION OF ORIGIN, 1990

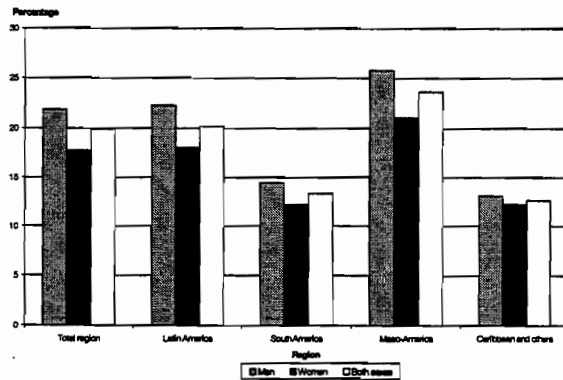


Figure I.20  
UNITED STATES: YOUNG PEOPLE AS A PERCENTAGE OF OVERALL POPULATION BORN IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, BY REGION OF ORIGIN, 1997

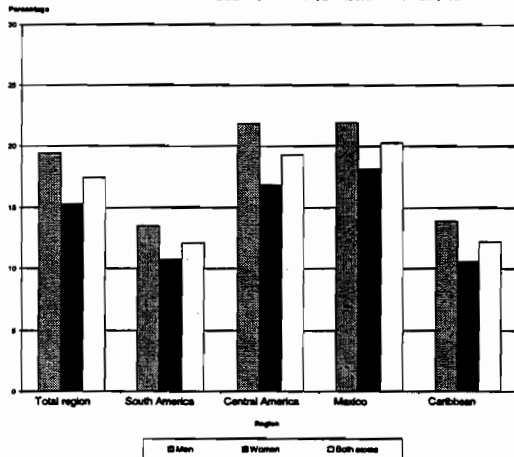


Figure I.21  
UNITED STATES: SEX RATIO AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND IN OVERALL POPULATION BORN IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, BY REGION OF ORIGIN, 1980

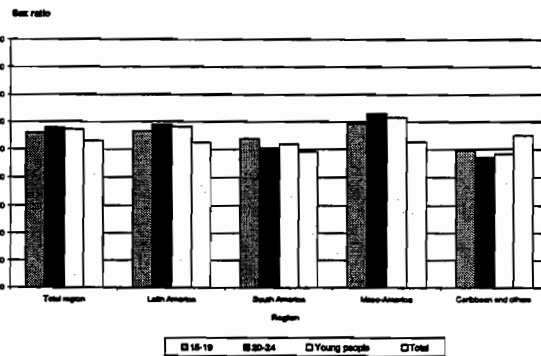


Figure I.22  
UNITED STATES: SEX RATIO AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND IN OVERALL POPULATION BORN IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, BY REGION OF ORIGIN, 1990

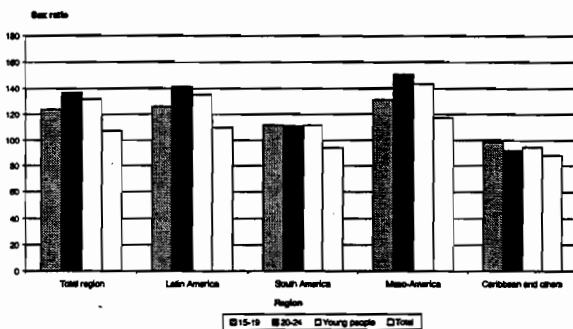
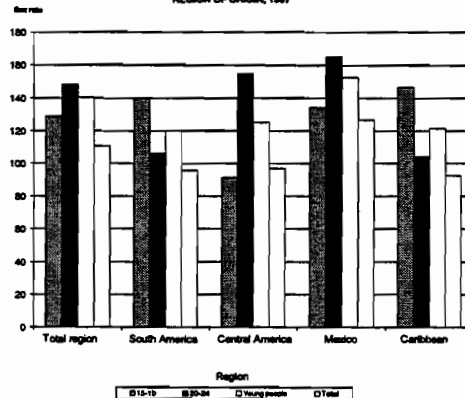


Figure I.23  
UNITED STATES: SEX RATIO AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND IN OVERALL POPULATION BORN IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, BY REGION OF ORIGIN, 1997



Source: Investigation of International Migration in Latin America (IMILA) Project.

In summary, there is a trend toward less participation by young people in the migratory movements to the United States and, except in the case of certain countries, there is a clear sex differentiation, with relatively greater participation by men. Still, data from the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) on yearly permanent admissions show that, in the highest-volume cases, young people made up 25% of all admissions in 1994 and in 1996.<sup>10</sup>

It must be concluded, then, that Latin American and Caribbean young people are not dominant participants in migration to the United States, although—in addition to the specific features of annual admissions noted above—the situation varies depending on the migrants' country of origin. Further study of the characteristics of these migrants is called for.

The available information, which is derived from data published in the United States census of 1990, sheds some light on the association between educational achievement and periods of residence among young people. When a high number of years of residence in the destination country coincides with low educational levels, young people can be expected to be in a disadvantaged position, since they will generally not have achieved much progress in the educational sphere, their position in the destination country will be precarious, and they will probably be faced with a premature transition into adult life. The data in table II.10 show that, among all young immigrants, 41% had completed at least middle or secondary school. Among these young people, 47% had a degree from an institution of higher learning, while 72% were enrolled in some educational establishment. The table also reveals that 60% had resided for more than 10 years in the United States, which indicates that their educational achievements were realized mainly in that country. However, the proportion of young people with very low levels of educational achievement (i.e., they did not even complete middle or secondary school) is over half. Of course, the profile differs according to region of origin, and there is a clear distinction between immigrants from Meso-America—who appear to be in a particularly disadvantaged situation—and those from South America and the Caribbean.

### 3. Final reflections

Although the total number of young emigrants makes up less than 3% of the total population of young people in the countries of the region, it is important to point out that this fact is due essentially to the volume of emigration to the United States, particularly from geographically proximate countries. Although the proportion of young people in migrant stocks is low and continues to decline, among youth populations who do migrate several interesting features can be identified which are linked to attributes of these populations—some of them acquired in their countries of origin and some in the destination countries. Two situations are clearly distinguishable. On the one hand is the disadvantaged situation of young people who

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<sup>10</sup> This information refers to the year persons were legally admitted as immigrants, which is generally not the same as the year in which they entered the country. Compared to the data on migrant stocks, the percentages are higher, since the censuses and the Current Population Survey (CPS) count undocumented aliens, which include larger numbers of adults, especially men. In the figures on persons who have formalized their immigration status, which partly reflect annual admissions, these individuals are represented to a lesser extent, whereas the percentage of young people rises. The more stringent requirements for young people who aspire to become integrated into society in the United States—such as attendance at an educational institution—may be behind this pattern. In addition, the admission of young people often derives from family reunification—the principal category of admission—as is reflected in the fact that in overall admissions of persons of all ages there is a marked predominance of women, but among young people the proportions are about equal. These data come from the statistical yearbooks of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service.

migrate from neighbouring countries to countries that attract large numbers of migrants. They are disadvantaged by lower levels of education and integration into the labour market; in addition, they are more likely to make the transition into adult life at an earlier age as a result of having assumed the responsibilities of living with a partner and forming a household. Women are more generally and visibly affected by these disadvantages. On the other hand, for some young people, migration affords opportunities for achieving greater success and exercising more options. This is mainly true of those who migrate beyond neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, both in intraregional migration and extraregional emigration to the United States, there is a clear predominance of youths who may be made more vulnerable by migration. This is the case especially with movements between nations that share borders or are located near one another.

The geographic features of international migration among young people are the most visible aspects of the specific situations examined above, which warrant a closer look at some generalizations. The emigration of disadvantaged people might alleviate structural tensions and might be seen as a source of opportunities for the migrants themselves. At the same time, emigrants who have high levels of education and are not bound by conjugal obligations represent an important loss for their countries and communities of origin. These losses are exacerbated if the migration becomes permanent when the countries of origin fail to provide incentives and mechanisms to keep them tied to different activities, taking advantage of their experience and abilities.



### III. STANDARD OF LIVING, SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND FORMS OF REPRESENTATION

After analyzing the main demographic trends, the next step is to study the standard of living, social stratification and forms of representation of Latin American and Caribbean youth, with a focus on the poverty that affects a significant percentage.

#### A. YOUTH AND POVERTY IN LATIN AMERICA

Undoubtedly, one of the main problems afflicting the region is related to the high and persistent levels of poverty which are found to a greater or lesser degree in almost every country in the region. It is therefore important to determine the incidence of poverty among the youth population and then evaluate how those problems influence other spheres in the development of new generations.

##### 1. A preliminary overview

The ECLAC *Social Panorama of Latin America, 1998* contains the most current data available on the levels of poverty and indigence in the region, and it is broad enough to provide a satisfactory picture of the situation. The report opens with the statement that “between 1990 and 1997 poverty diminished in the great majority of Latin American countries, with the percentage of poor households decreasing from 41% to 36%, which was nearly as low as the level attained in 1980 (35%). This reduction also made it possible to curb the growth of the poor population, which had jumped from 136 million to 200 million during the 1980s but had not risen beyond 204 million as of 1997” (ECLAC, 1999b).

That report goes on to warn that despite the positive changes described above, the data must be taken with a degree of caution given the anticipated deceleration of economic expansion, which was fully confirmed in late 1999. According to the ECLAC *Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999*, growth fell from 5.4% in 1997 to 2.1% in 1998 and was null in 1999 (ECLAC, 1999a). This setback has translated into another surge of poverty, at least in the countries most strongly affected by the recession; Ecuador is the clearest example. The direct relation between economic growth and the reduction of poverty becomes evident upon comparing recent trends in Chile and Venezuela: in the former country per capita income increased 47.8% and poverty fell 13.0% between 1990 and 1996, while in the latter per capita income fell by 0.5% and poverty grew by 8.0% from 1990 to 1997. Poverty, however, has evolved heterogeneously in the different countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Table III.1 delineates inequality in the region, listing countries alphabetically. Using this data for the period 1996-1997, ECLAC identifies three groups of countries, based on their relative levels of poverty:

- **Countries with a low level of urban poverty** (less than 20%): Uruguay (6%), which has drastically reduced urban poverty from a magnitude of 14% in 1986; Argentina (Greater Buenos Aires, 13%), which falls within this category despite having tripled its poverty level since 1980 (5%); Chile (19%), which managed to substantially improve its situation in the 1990s, dropping from 33% in 1990 to rejoin the group of countries with a low poverty index; and Costa Rica

(17%), which in the last decades has not registered serious fluctuations in the proportion of the population living in poverty, which was 22% in 1990.

- **Countries with a medium level of urban poverty** (from 20% to 39%): Panama (25%), which achieved a significant reduction from its previously high level of 34% in 1991; Brazil (25%), which has fallen 11 percentage points since 1990; Peru (25%), which dropped 8 percentage points in just two years (1995-1997); and Mexico (38%), whose level of urban poverty rose from 29% in 1994.
- **Countries with a high level of urban poverty** (40% or more): Paraguay (40%); Venezuela (41%), which has faced this harsh situation since 1994, despite registering a level of 18% in 1981; and Guatemala, (48% in 1989, the last year for which data are available). These last countries, together with Nicaragua (66%) and Honduras (67%), have always displayed the highest levels of urban poverty in the region. Haiti should also be added to the list, although data on the exact level is not available. The natural disaster that affected Nicaragua and Honduras in late 1998 has undoubtedly contributed to worsening an already extremely difficult situation; it is reasonable to assume that the same will occur in Venezuela as a result of the floods of late 1999.

Table III.1  
**POVERTY AND INDIGENCE BY COUNTRY, 1990-1997**  
*(Percentages)*

Country	Year	Households below poverty line <sup>a</sup>			Households below the indigence line		
		National total	Urban areas	Rural areas	National total	Urban areas	Rural areas
Argentina <sup>b</sup>	1990	-	16	-	-	4	-
	1994	-	10	-	-	2	-
	1997	-	13	-	-	3	-
Bolivia <sup>c</sup>	1990	-	47	-	-	20	-
	1994	-	46	-	-	17	-
	1997	-	44	-	-	16	-
		57	(47)	72	33	(19)	54
Brazil <sup>d</sup>	1990	41	36	64	18	13	38
	1993	37	33	53	15	12	30
	1996	29	25	46	11	8	23
Chile	1990	33	33	34	11	10	12
	1994	24	24	26	7	6	8
	1996	20	19	26	5	4	8
Colombia	1990	-	35 <sup>e</sup>	-	-	12 <sup>e</sup>	-
	1994	47	41	57	25	16	38
	1997	45	39	54	20	15	29
Costa Rica	1990	24	22	25	10	7	12
	1994	21	18	23	8	6	10
	1997	20	17	23	7	5	9
Dominican Republic	1997	32	32	34	13	11	15
Ecuador	1990	-	56	-	-	23	-
	1994	-	52	-	-	22	-
	1997	-	50	-	-	19	-
El Salvador	1995	48	40	58	18	12	27
	1997	48	39	62	19	12	28
Guatemala	1989	63	48	72	37	23	45
Honduras	1990	75	65	84	54	38	66
	1994	73	70	76	49	41	55
	1997	74	67	80	48	35	59
Mexico	1989	39	34	49	14	9	23
	1994	36	29	47	12	6	20
	1996	43	38	53	16	10	25
Nicaragua	1997	-	66	-	-	36	-
Panama	1991	36	34	43	16	14	21
	1994	30	25	41	12	9	20
	1997	27	25	34	10	9	14
Paraguay	1990	-	37 <sup>f</sup>	-	-	10 <sup>f</sup>	-
	1994	-	42	-	-	15	-
	1996	-	40	-	-	13	-
Peru <sup>g</sup>	1995	41	33	56	18	10	35
	1997	37	25	61	18	7	41

Table III.1 (concl.)

Country	Year	Households below poverty line <sup>a</sup>			Households below the indigence line		
		National total	Urban areas	Rural areas	National total	Urban areas	Rural areas
Uruguay	1990	-	12	-	-	2	-
	1994	-	6	-	-	1	-
	1997	-	6	-	-	1	-
Venezuela	1990	34	33	38	12	11	17
	1994	42	41	48	15	14	23
	1997	42	-	-	17	-	-
Latin America <sup>h</sup>	1990	41	35	58	18	12	34
	1994	38	32	56	16	11	34
	1997	36	30	54	15	10	31

Source: ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America, 1998*.

<sup>a</sup> Includes indigent and extremely poor households.

<sup>b</sup> Greater Buenos Aires.

<sup>c</sup> Eight regional capitals plus the city of El Alto. Data in parenthesis corresponds to the total urban area of the country.

<sup>d</sup> Provisional data.

<sup>e</sup> Eight principal cities.

<sup>f</sup> Asunción Metropolitan area.

<sup>g</sup> Data from the Peruvian National Institute of Statistics and Information (INEI), on the basis of National Household Surveys (ENAHU) for 1995 and 1997 (fourth quarter). ECLAC's undertaking relative estimates.

<sup>h</sup> Estimate for 19 countries of the region.



The *Social Panorama* also analyses the factors associated with the growth of poverty: "The improvements and setbacks reflected in poverty statistics during the 1990s in Latin American countries demonstrate how much economic growth influences changes of this nature in the medium and long terms. The changes in the labour market that are associated with growth bring out cross-country differences and heighten the poverty-reducing effects of economic expansion when growth contributes to a higher household employment ratio and to the creation of more productive and better-paid jobs. The above-average economic performance of some countries is largely attributable to their success in taming inflation, to changes in the relative prices of the basket of staple goods used by low-income households and to the increase in transfer payments to poor households. Countries vary as far as their starting positions and medium-term growth prospects are concerned, and the relationships among the different factors that affect poverty levels are therefore quite complex; this fact needs to be borne in mind by policy makers and administrators" (ECLAC, 1999b).

## **2. Specific characteristics of the youth situation**

In order to situate the youth experience within this context, CELADE requested that the ECLAC Division of Statistics and Economic Projections specially disaggregate the data by age for the purposes of this report. The resulting data clearly show that in every country, poverty among young people is higher than the corresponding national average, especially among adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age (see table III.2). The situation among children aged 10 to 14 is even more critical, while the opposite occurs among the population aged 30 to 59 years. This demonstrates an inverse relation between age and level of poverty: the lower the age, the greater the poverty, and vice versa. The countries that are not included in the sample most probably follow the same trend, but proof is not available.

Table III.2  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SELECTED COUNTRIES: HOUSEHOLD  
 POVERTY LEVEL, BY AGE GROUP AND GENDER**  
 (Percentages)

Country, area, age group	Poor			Non-poor		
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
<b>ARGENTINA, 1997</b>						
<b>Greater Buenos Aires</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	27	25	28	73	75	72
15 - 19 years of age	20	20	20	80	80	80
20 - 24 years of age	12	12	13	88	88	87
25 - 29 years of age	14	13	16	86	87	84
30 - 59 years of age	14	13	14	86	87	86
<b>BOLIVIA, 1997</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	60	61	59	40	39	41
15 - 19 years of age	53	53	53	47	47	47
20 - 24 years of age	44	38	49	56	62	51
25 - 29 years of age	48	43	52	52	57	48
30 - 59 years of age	46	46	47	54	54	53
<b>Rural</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	84	82	86	16	18	14
15 - 19 years of age	79	78	81	21	22	19
20 - 24 years of age	72	70	75	28	30	25
25 - 29 years of age	73	68	77	27	32	23
30 - 59 years of age	76	74	79	24	26	21
<b>BRAZIL, 1996</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	41	41	41	59	59	59
15 - 19 years of age	33	32	33	67	68	67
20 - 24 years of age	27	25	29	73	75	71
25 - 29 years of age	28	26	29	72	74	71
30 - 59 years of age	24	24	25	76	76	75
<b>Rural</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	69	68	70	31	32	30
15 - 19 years of age	57	56	59	43	44	41
20 - 24 years of age	49	47	52	51	53	48
25 - 29 years of age	50	45	54	50	55	46
30 - 59 years of age	50	50	50	50	50	50
<b>COLOMBIA, 1997</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	56	56	56	44	44	44
15 - 19 years of age	49	47	50	51	53	50
20 - 24 years of age	39	38	41	61	62	59
25 - 29 years of age	38	35	41	62	65	59
30 - 59 years of age	38	37	39	62	63	61
<b>Rural</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	69	69	68	31	31	32
15 - 19 years of age	58	56	62	42	44	38
20 - 24 years of age	51	47	56	49	53	44
25 - 29 years of age	55	49	61	45	51	39
30 - 59 years of age	54	53	55	46	47	45

Table III.2 (cont. 1)

Country, area, age group	Poor			Non-poor		
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
<b>COSTA RICA, 1997</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	28	30	26	72	70	74
15 - 19 years of age	20	19	20	80	81	80
20 - 24 years of age	13	8	18	87	92	82
25 - 29 years of age	14	11	18	86	89	82
30 - 59 years of age	15	13	17	85	87	83
<b>Rural</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	32	32	33	68	68	67
15 - 19 years of age	21	18	25	79	82	75
20 - 24 years of age	16	13	19	84	87	81
25 - 29 years of age	17	14	20	83	86	80
30 - 59 years of age	21	19	22	79	81	78
<b>CHILE, 1998</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	30	31	28	70	69	72
15 - 19 years of age	25	23	26	75	77	74
20 - 24 years of age	17	16	19	83	84	81
25 - 29 years of age	18	15	20	82	85	80
30 - 59 years of age	17	17	18	83	83	82
<b>Rural</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	38	38	38	62	62	62
15 - 19 years of age	28	26	31	72	74	69
20 - 24 years of age	20	18	23	80	82	77
25 - 29 years of age	26	21	31	74	79	69
30 - 59 years of age	25	24	25	75	76	75
<b>ECUADOR, 1997</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	66	66	67	34	34	33
15 - 19 years of age	58	56	60	42	44	40
20 - 24 years of age	53	50	55	47	50	45
25 - 29 years of age	50	47	54	50	53	46
30 - 59 years of age	50	49	50	50	51	50
<b>EL SALVADOR, 1997</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	54	53	55	46	47	45
15 - 19 years of age	47	46	48	53	54	52
20 - 24 years of age	38	36	40	62	64	60
25 - 29 years of age	38	34	41	62	66	59
30 - 59 years of age	37	35	38	63	65	62
<b>Rural</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	76	76	75	24	24	25
15 - 19 years of age	67	65	69	33	35	31
20 - 24 years of age	60	55	66	40	45	34
25 - 29 years of age	60	52	66	40	48	34
30 - 59 years of age	64	63	66	36	37	34

Table III.2 (cont.2)

Country, area, age group	Poor			Non-poor		
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
<b>HONDURAS, 1997</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	78	77	80	22	23	20
15 - 19 years of age	70	71	69	30	29	31
20 - 24 years of age	66	63	68	34	37	32
25 - 29 years of age	68	64	72	32	36	28
30 - 59 years of age	67	67	68	33	33	32
<b>Rural</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	88	88	88	12	12	12
15 - 19 years of age	82	82	82	18	18	18
20 - 24 years of age	78	75	81	22	25	19
25 - 29 years of age	82	80	84	18	20	16
30 - 59 years of age	81	81	81	19	19	19
<b>MEXICO, 1996</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	57	56	57	43	44	43
15 - 19 years of age	50	50	50	50	50	50
20 - 24 years of age	43	39	47	57	61	53
25 - 29 years of age	38	37	39	62	63	61
30 - 59 years of age	39	39	39	61	61	61
<b>Rural</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	71	71	71	29	29	29
15 - 19 years of age	63	63	63	37	37	37
20 - 24 years of age	57	57	56	43	43	44
25 - 29 years of age	54	52	56	46	48	44
30 - 59 years of age	57	57	56	43	43	44
<b>PANAMA, 1997</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	34	35	34	66	65	66
15 - 19 years of age	25	23	26	75	77	74
20 - 24 years of age	19	17	21	81	83	79
25 - 29 years of age	19	16	22	81	84	78
30 - 59 years of age	17	15	19	83	85	81
<b>Rural</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	60	60	59	40	40	41
15 - 19 years of age	49	49	50	51	51	50
20 - 24 years of age	39	32	45	61	68	55
25 - 29 years of age	44	39	48	56	61	52
30 - 59 years of age	40	38	43	60	62	57
<b>PARAGUAY, 1996</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	57	57	57	43	43	43
15 - 19 years of age	47	46	48	53	54	52
20 - 24 years of age	34	33	35	66	67	65
25 - 29 years of age	33	30	36	67	70	64
30 - 59 years of age	40	40	41	60	60	59

Table III.2 (concl.)

Country, area, age group	Poor			Non-poor		
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
<b>DOMINICAN REP., 1997</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	43	43	43	57	57	57
15 - 19 years of age	37	33	39	63	67	61
20 - 24 years of age	26	22	29	74	78	71
25 - 29 years of age	26	21	31	74	79	69
30 - 59 years of age	30	28	32	70	72	68
<b>Rural</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	50	53	48	50	47	52
15 - 19 years of age	37	35	39	63	65	61
20 - 24 years of age	27	24	32	73	76	68
25 - 29 years of age	28	21	35	72	79	65
30 - 59 years of age	34	30	38	66	70	62
<b>URUGUAY, 1997</b>						
<b>Urban</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	17	17	17	83	83	83
15 - 19 years of age	12	11	12	88	89	88
20 - 24 years of age	8	7	9	92	93	91
25 - 29 years of age	9	8	10	91	92	90
30 - 59 years of age	7	7	7	93	93	93
<b>VENEZUELA, 1997</b>						
<b>National total</b>						
10 - 14 years of age	58	59	56	42	41	44
15 - 19 years of age	49	47	50	51	53	50
20 - 24 years of age	41	39	44	59	61	56
25 - 29 years of age	43	41	46	57	59	54
30 - 59 years of age	40	38	42	60	62	58

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of household surveys for the respective countries.

The data speak for themselves. The adolescent group (15 to 19 years of age) comprises more than 4 million poor youth in Brazil, almost 3 million in Mexico and more than 1 million in Colombia. In relative terms, the most worrisome situations are found in Honduras (where 70% of urban adolescents live in poverty), Ecuador (58%), Bolivia (53%) and Mexico (50%). The situation is less dramatic in Uruguay (12%), Argentina and Costa Rica (both 20%), Brazil (33%) and the Dominican Republic (37%). The situation among youth per se (20 to 24 years of age) and young adults (25 to 29 years of age) is less critical, though no less important as a result.

The data further demonstrate that poverty is systematically higher among young women than young men, which is true for all youth age groups and for all the countries in the sample. Thus, for example, among urban youth aged 20 to 24, poverty affects 38% of the men and 49% of the women in Bolivia, 8% and 18%, respectively, in Costa Rica, 39% and 47% in Mexico, and 22% and 29% in the Dominican Republic. The situation is less unequal in Uruguay (7% and 9%), Paraguay (33% and 35%), Colombia (38% and 41%), Chile (16% and 19%) and Brazil (25% and 29%). In no case, however, is the trend reversed.

A similar trend is found with regard to poverty among rural youth, which is always higher than that of urban youth. In Bolivia, for example, poverty among rural adolescents reached 79% compared to

53% among urban adolescents; the same trend occurs among youth aged 20 to 24 (72% and 44%, respectively) and youth aged 25 to 29 (73% and 48%, in each case). In Brazil, the situation is similar: the figures are 59% and 33%, respectively, among adolescents, 49% and 27% among youth, and 50% and 28% among young adults. In Mexico, as well, the differences are striking (63% and 50%; 57% and 43%; and 54% and 38%, in each case). The differences are smaller in the Dominican Republic: 37% for both rural and urban adolescents, and barely 1% or 2% difference within the other two groups. Chile also demonstrates a lower degree of variation (28% and 25%; 20% and 17%; and 26% and 18%).

### 3. Poverty, education and employment

Education and employment are two key dimensions in the process of youth emancipation for several reasons. In the case of Uruguay, Filgueira (1998) structures a simple, but highly relevant matrix on the basis of the two variables, thus identifying four typical situations that characterize youth. The possible situations that result are as follows:

- The first combination of the two variables corresponds to youth who study but don't work. This is equivalent to the economic and residential dependence that is typical among youth, and it comprises almost all single young people living with their parents. This status can be referred to as adolescent to distinguish it from the other three.
- The inverse combination of youth who work but who have left the education system corresponds to the typical configuration of the system of adult roles.
- The third combination, namely, youth who both work and study, can be interpreted as a prolonged process of moving toward adult life. Consequently, it is called transition.
- Finally, youth in the fourth category, who neither study nor work, are called outsiders. With respect to the sequence of societal roles, they have lost their structural positions in the youth world without acquiring new ones in the adult world (Filgueira, 1998).

Tables III.3 and III.4 present the available data for grouping the region's youth in these four categories, differentiating them by gender, age, residential area and presence or absence of poverty. Although almost by definition the majority of youth should be grouped within the first category (studying only), while the fourth category (neither studying nor working) should not include young people at all, in reality the results frequently deviate from the expected norm, presenting a wide variety of experiences. Some of the more significant findings are as follows:

- The typical adolescent status (i.e., studying only) applies for a considerable segment of urban youth aged 15 to 19, comprising between one-half and two-thirds of this group in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and El Salvador; it is particularly prevalent among those who are not poor. At the rural level, however, this status is nonexistent or only reaches just over a third of youth in Mexico, Ecuador and Honduras. Among 20- to 24-year-olds, the student-only group drops sharply, ranging from 6% of poor youth in Brazil to 32% of non-poor youth in Bolivia, at the urban level. This falling trend grows even sharper among youth aged 25 to 29, among whom just 5%, on average, maintain this status at the urban level,

above all among the non-poor. Among poor youth, in contrast, the average drops to less than 2%, and in several countries it is no more than 1% of the total.

- The opposite situation is that of youth who only work and who therefore identify with adult roles. Among poor young men from rural areas, for example, between 60% and 90% fall within this category. This contrasts sharply with the women of the same group, of whom only one-fifth to one-third fit this category. Naturally, the figures increase with age: for both poor and non-poor groups, the indices are relatively low among adolescents aged 15 to 19 and higher among youth aged 20 to 29, especially at the urban level. The gender variable carries substantial weight in this category, marking a trend that clearly divides men and women once they leave off studying: whereas young men enter the workforce on a massive scale, only a portion of young women do so, because a considerable segment takes on responsibilities within the household. As has been said elsewhere in this report (and is repeated here), such discrimination should be firmly addressed.
- In the case of young people in transition (i.e., both studying and working), the general situation presents well-differentiated national patterns. This segment of the youth population is very small in Chile, Colombia and Mexico. In Brazil, Bolivia and Costa Rica, in contrast, the group is considerably larger. Among the first group of countries, the predominant pattern appears to be one of a short, but very intense educational experience, which young people endure under the belief that it will prepare them for a better entry into the job market in the future. The second group of countries appear to reward the ability to combine both activities, which leads to lengthening the time spent in the education system while simultaneously gaining practical experience in the job market, possibly with lower expectations in terms of future social mobility. Data indicate that between 3% and 16% of youth in the former group of countries and between 10% and 32% in the latter fall within this category.
- Finally, the group of young people who neither work nor study (the outsiders) is much larger than expected. The numbers are particularly worrisome among young women in rural areas, who are to large extent responsible for household tasks, and among poor young men in urban areas, who are generally exposed to multiple risks, including possible participation in criminal gangs. The figures for women range, on average, from 10% to 30% among non-poor young women in urban areas and from 40% to 80% among their poor rural counterparts. With regard to young men in urban areas, the numbers vary from 5% to 15% among the poor and 3% to 8% among the non-poor. The figures for Bolivia are surprisingly low, which may be explained by the fact that poverty doesn't Greatt the luxury of doing nothing. Costa Rica is striking because its levels are so high, perhaps because low levels of poverty and the existence of some degree of social security coverage allow the existence of a relatively high number of these cases, which are not numerous in absolute terms. As a result of such variation, any comparison among countries should be undertaken with great caution, while bearing in mind the specific national characteristics in this area.

Table III.3  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SELECTED COUNTRIES: POOR YOUTH BY AGE GROUP,  
HOUSEHOLD POVERTY LEVEL AND GENDER**  
*(Percentages)*

Country, area, age group	Economically active and attending school				Economically active and not attending school				Not economically active and attending school				Not economically active and not attending school			
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)
<b>ARGENTINA, 1997</b>																
Greater Buenos Aires																
10 - 14 years of age	1	2	1	1	2	0	95	93	98	3	4	2				
15 - 19 years of age	4	3	4	38	47	26	40	36	45	18	13	25				
20 - 24 years of age	6	7	4	55	77	35	6	3	8	34	13	53				
25 - 29 years of age	0	0	0	61	95	34	0	0	0	39	5	66				
<b>BOLIVIA, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	9	10	7	1	2	1	88	86	90	2	2	2				
15 - 19 years of age	17	19	15	12	14	10	66	65	68	5	3	7				
20 - 24 years of age	11	12	10	39	54	29	29	31	27	21	3	35				
25 - 29 years of age	5	6	4	61	82	47	9	9	8	25	3	41				
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	45	48	42	12	10	15	41	41	41	2	1	3				
15 - 19 years of age	25	29	21	58	55	60	12	15	9	5	1	9				
20 - 24 years of age	2	4	0	84	91	76	1	1	2	13	4	22				
25 - 29 years of age	1	1	0	87	96	80	0	0	0	12	2	20				
<b>BRAZIL, 1996</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	10	14	7	3	4	2	79	75	84	8	8	8				
15 - 19 years of age	22	26	18	26	33	18	34	28	39	19	13	25				
20 - 24 years of age	10	12	8	53	72	38	6	4	7	31	13	47				
25 - 29 years of age	3	3	3	62	86	43	1	1	1	33	10	53				
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	29	39	18	10	13	6	52	40	64	10	8	12				
15 - 19 years of age	22	28	16	43	56	27	18	10	28	17	7	29				
20 - 24 years of age	7	9	5	64	83	44	3	1	5	26	6	46				
25 - 29 years of age	2	2	2	72	93	54	0	0	1	26	5	43				



Table III.3 (cont.1)

Country, area, age group	Economically active and attending school				Economically active and not attending school				Not economically active and attending school				Not economically active and not attending school			
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	
<b>COLOMBIA, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	1	1	1		2	4	1		89	88	91		7	7	7	
15 - 19 years of age	6	8	5		22	28	18		56	55	57		15	9	20	
20 - 24 years of age	7	7	6		58	74	45		12	13	11		24	6	38	
25 - 29 years of age	2	2	2		70	93	53		2	1	2		26	3	43	
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	3	4	1		6	9	2		80	79	82		11	8	14	
15 - 19 years of age	8	11	4		30	44	16		44	40	49		18	5	31	
20 - 24 years of age	3	4	3		54	84	27		8	8	8		35	4	62	
25 - 29 years of age	1	2	1		62	94	36		1	0	2		36	4	62	
<b>COSTA RICA, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	1	1	0		1	2	0		90	90	90		8	7	10	
15 - 19 years of age	9	13	4		22	28	15		47	38	57		23	21	24	
20 - 24 years of age	6	6	6		37	71	21		10	12	10		46	11	62	
25 - 29 years of age	0	0	1		54	83	34		4	5	4		42	12	62	
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	2	3	2		5	8	3		77	78	76		15	11	19	
15 - 19 years of age	4	5	3		33	51	17		31	29	33		32	14	46	
20 - 24 years of age	3	2	3		45	82	21		5	4	6		47	12	70	
25 - 29 years of age	0	1	0		49	89	20		1	1	1		49	10	79	
<b>CHILE, 1998</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	1	1	0		1	1	0		96	95	97		3	3	3	
15 - 19 years of age	3	4	2		15	19	11		64	62	65		19	15	22	
20 - 24 years of age	2	3	1		52	73	35		11	13	9		35	12	54	
25 - 29 years of age	1	1	1		57	88	34		2	2	2		40	9	64	
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	0	0	0		1	1	0		97	97	98		2	2	2	
15 - 19 years of age	1	1	0		19	27	12		53	56	51		27	16	37	
20 - 24 years of age	0	0	0		45	75	18		7	8	5		48	16	76	
25 - 29 years of age	1	1	0		43	82	15		0	0	1		56	16	84	

Table III.3 (cont.2)

Country, area, age group	Economically active and attending school				Economically active and not attending school				Not economically active and attending school				Not economically active and not attending school			
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	
<b>ECUADOR, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	3	5	2		3	5	2		90	86	93		4	4	3	
15 - 19 years of age	9	10	7		25	33	17		56	54	58		10	3	17	
20 - 24 years of age	9	12	6		53	70	38		17	15	19		22	3	37	
25 - 29 years of age	5	7	3		64	89	44		5	2	6		26	2	47	
<b>EL SALVADOR, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	2	3	2		4	6	2		87	85	89		7	7	7	
15 - 19 years of age	6	8	3		23	34	13		54	51	58		17	7	27	
20 - 24 years of age	5	7	4		58	76	42		12	12	12		25	5	42	
25 - 29 years of age	3	3	2		64	90	48		3	3	2		31	4	48	
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	6	10	1		10	16	3		70	66	74		15	8	22	
15 - 19 years of age	5	9	2		38	60	15		29	28	29		28	4	54	
20 - 24 years of age	1	2	1		55	91	23		5	3	7		39	4	70	
25 - 29 years of age	0	0	0		50	94	22		0	0	0		49	6	77	
<b>HONDURAS, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	4	3	4		5	7	3		81	80	82		10	9	11	
15 - 19 years of age	8	10	6		37	52	23		37	28	46		18	10	26	
20 - 24 years of age	6	7	5		59	81	44		8	6	10		26	5	41	
25 - 29 years of age	4	5	3		66	91	47		2	2	2		27	2	48	
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	4	5	3		12	20	4		69	67	71		15	9	22	
15 - 19 years of age	2	3	1		53	81	20		15	11	19		30	5	60	
20 - 24 years of age	1	2	1		59	94	26		1	1	2		38	3	71	
25 - 29 years of age	1	1	0		60	96	28		1	0	1		39	3	71	

Table III.3 (cont.3)

Country, area, age group	Economically active and attending school				Economically active and not attending school				Not economically active and attending school				Not economically active and not attending school			
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	
<b>MEXICO, 1996</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	4	5	2		3	4	2		87	88	86		7	3	10	
15 - 19 years of age	6	8	4		36	44	27		39	40	38		19	8	32	
20 - 24 years of age	4	4	3		55	81	35		11	10	11		30	4	51	
25 - 29 years of age	1	2	0		61	95	34		2	1	2		36	2	63	
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	7	9	5		8	12	5		75	76	73		10	3	17	
15 - 19 years of age	5	7	2		51	71	30		18	18	18		26	4	50	
20 - 24 years of age	2	2	1		59	93	32		1	1	2		38	4	66	
25 - 29 years of age	1	2	0		61	96	34		0	0	0		37	2	65	
<b>PANAMA, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	0	1	0		1	2	0		95	93	97		3	4	3	
15 - 19 years of age	5	6	3		22	33	13		61	54	66		13	7	18	
20 - 24 years of age	8	8	8		60	81	42		9	6	12		22	5	38	
25 - 29 years of age	3	2	4		58	92	35		3	2	4		36	4	56	
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	1	2	1		5	8	1		88	87	89		6	3	10	
15 - 19 years of age	4	5	2		38	57	16		37	32	42		22	6	40	
20 - 24 years of age	2	1	2		51	91	21		6	4	8		41	3	69	
25 - 29 years of age	1	1	1		57	97	22		1	0	1		42	2	76	
<b>PARAGUAY, 1996</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	17	23	10		6	8	3		74	67	81		4	2	6	
15 - 19 years of age	21	27	16		30	38	23		28	25	31		20	10	30	
20 - 24 years of age	3	3	4		65	85	48		2	1	2		29	11	46	
25 - 29 years of age	1	1	2		58	98	30		1	1	0		40	0	68	

Table III.3 (concl.)

Country, area, age group	Economically active and attending school				Economically active and not attending school				Not economically active and attending school				Not economically active and not attending school			
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	
<b>DOMINICAN REP. 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	5	6	3		2	2	1		89	85	93		5	6	3	
15 - 19 years of age	15	21	11		12	16	10		64	58	69		9	5	11	
20 - 24 years of age	12	16	10		48	63	38		14	12	16		25	10	36	
25 - 29 years of age	8	9	7		59	86	42		4	2	5		30	3	46	
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	9	14	2		2	2	1		85	78	94		5	6	3	
15 - 19 years of age	25	38	12		16	18	14		45	38	51		14	6	22	
20 - 24 years of age	15	15	15		47	68	31		7	4	9		31	13	45	
25 - 29 years of age	2	0	3		47	89	23		1	0	2		50	11	73	
<b>URUGUAY, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	1	1	0		1	1	1		89	89	89		9	9	10	
15 - 19 years of age	8	9	8		44	56	34		24	19	28		24	17	31	
20 - 24 years of age	3	3	3		67	89	49		2	0	3		29	9	45	
25 - 29 years of age	1	1	1		67	95	41		0	0	1		32	4	58	
<b>VENEZUELA, 1997</b>																
National total																
10 - 14 years of age	3	4	2		2	4	1		90	87	92		5	5	5	
15 - 19 years of age	6	8	4		27	40	14		47	42	52		19	9	29	
20 - 24 years of age	7	7	7		56	80	34		12	8	15		25	5	43	
25 - 29 years of age	4	4	5		63	91	38		3	1	5		29	3	53	

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of household surveys for the respective countries.

Table III.4  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SELECTED COUNTRIES: NON-POOR YOUTH BY AGE, HOUSEHOLD POVERTY LEVEL AND GENDER**  
*(Percentages)*

Country, area, age group	Economically active and attending school			Economically active and not attending school			Not economically active and attending school			Not economically active and not attending school		
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
<b>ARGENTINA, 1997</b>												
Greater Buenos Aires												
10 - 14 years of age	0	1	0	0	0	1	99	98	99	0	0	1
15 - 19 years of age	8	8	7	20	25	14	64	61	67	8	6	11
20 - 24 years of age	21	22	21	55	67	44	13	10	15	11	1	20
25 - 29 years of age	11	13	9	72	84	59	2	2	3	15	1	29
<b>BOLIVIA, 1997</b>												
Urban												
10 - 14 years of age	8	9	7	1	1	1	90	89	90	1	1	1
15 - 19 years of age	16	17	15	12	16	8	65	65	65	7	2	11
20 - 24 years of age	16	17	15	42	52	31	32	28	36	10	3	18
25 - 29 years of age	10	11	10	65	74	57	11	11	10	13	4	23
Rural												
10 - 14 years of age	27	28	25	5	6	4	66	64	68	2	2	3
15 - 19 years of age	20	23	17	40	49	28	30	28	32	11	0	23
20 - 24 years of age	3	3	3	75	93	53	6	4	8	17	1	36
25 - 29 years of age	2	1	2	80	97	59	1	1	1	17	1	38
<b>BRAZIL, 1996</b>												
Urban												
10 - 14 years of age	8	10	6	1	1	1	88	86	91	3	2	3
15 - 19 years of age	28	32	24	22	27	17	41	35	47	9	6	12
20 - 24 years of age	18	19	17	59	70	49	8	6	10	14	5	24
25 - 29 years of age	8	9	7	73	86	61	2	1	3	17	4	29
Rural												
10 - 14 years of age	25	32	17	7	9	5	62	54	70	6	4	8
15 - 19 years of age	24	29	19	43	52	30	21	15	30	12	4	21
20 - 24 years of age	10	10	10	70	84	54	4	2	6	16	4	31
25 - 29 years of age	4	3	5	79	93	63	1	1	2	16	4	31

Table III.4 (Cont.1)

Country, area, age group	Economically active and attending school				Economically active and not attending school				Not economically active and attending school				Not economically active and not attending school			
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	
<b>COLOMBIA, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	1	2	1	1		2	1		94	93	95		3	4		
15 - 19 years of age	10	11	8	20		24	16		61	59	63		9	6		3
20 - 24 years of age	16	17	16	53		60	46		20	19	21		11	4		13
25 - 29 years of age	11	11	11	75		83	67		4	4	5		10	2		18
Rural																17
10 - 14 years of age	5	7	3	8		13	3		78	73	83		9	6		12
15 - 19 years of age	8	9	6	43		59	23		35	29	44		14	3		28
20 - 24 years of age	5	5	5	67		88	41		6	4	8		22	3		46
25 - 29 years of age	5	4	5	75		93	52		1	1	2		19	2		41
<b>COSTA RICA, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	1	1	0	1		2	1		95	94	95		4	3		4
15 - 19 years of age	12	13	10	20		29	12		57	53	61		11	6		16
20 - 24 years of age	19	21	17	47		59	32		18	15	21		16	4		29
25 - 29 years of age	15	16	14	67		80	53		3	3	4		14	1		30
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	3	5	1	6		9	3		84	81	86		7	5		10
15 - 19 years of age	10	11	8	41		55	22		31	26	36		19	7		34
20 - 24 years of age	8	8	9	62		84	38		6	4	8		24	3		46
25 - 29 years of age	4	5	3	66		92	36		1	1	2		28	2		59
<b>CHILE, 1998</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	1	1	1	0		0	0		99	98	99		1	1		1
15 - 19 years of age	4	5	4	12		14	9		75	75	74		10	7		13
20 - 24 years of age	7	8	6	51		61	41		27	26	27		15	5		25
25 - 29 years of age	4	5	3	74		85	61		5	6	4		17	3		32
Rural																
10 - 14 years of age	0	0	0	1		2	0		96	96	96		3	2		3
15 - 19 years of age	1	1	1	25		35	13		57	56	59		17	8		27
20 - 24 years of age	2	2	2	64		84	40		8	7	11		25	8		47
25 - 29 years of age	1	1	1	68		90	40		1	1	1		31	8		58
<b>ECUADOR, 1997</b>																
Urban																
10 - 14 years of age	3	3	2	2		2	1		94	93	96		1	1		2
15 - 19 years of age	8	10	7	19		26	12		67	62	72		6	2		9
20 - 24 years of age	17	17	17	51		61	41		22	21	23		10	1		20
25 - 29 years of age	10	12	9	73		84	62		4	4	5		12	1		24

Table III. 4 (cont.2)

Country, area, age group	Economically active and attending school				Economically active and not attending school				Not economically active and attending school				Not economically active and not attending school			
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)
<b>EL SALVADOR, 1997</b>																
<b>Urban</b>																
10 - 14 years of age	2	2	2	1	1	1				95	95	94	2	2	3	
15 - 19 years of age	8	8	7	15	20	10				70	68	72	8	4	11	
20 - 24 years of age	13	14	12	48	58	38				24	24	25	14	4	25	
25 - 29 years of age	11	13	10	69	80	60				6	5	7	13	1	23	
<b>Rural</b>																
10 - 14 years of age	5	9	1	9	13	3				79	73	84	8	4	11	
15 - 19 years of age	8	12	3	41	56	23				32	28	35	20	4	39	
20 - 24 years of age	4	5	2	69	88	42				7	5	10	20	2	46	
25 - 29 years of age	2	3	2	76	93	56				2	2	2	19	2	40	
<b>HONDURAS, 1997</b>																
<b>Urban</b>																
10 - 14 years of age	4	2	5	2	1	2				91	93	89	4	4	4	
15 - 19 years of age	9	9	9	24	33	16				58	54	61	9	3	14	
20 - 24 years of age	20	20	20	53	66	42				17	12	21	10	2	17	
25 - 29 years of age	15	17	13	73	81	64				2	2	2	10	1	21	
<b>Rural</b>																
10 - 14 years of age	3	3	2	10	14	4				79	77	82	8	6	11	
15 - 19 years of age	3	3	3	48	69	23				26	24	29	23	4	45	
20 - 24 years of age	3	4	2	67	89	39				6	6	5	24	2	54	
25 - 29 years of age	2	3	0	77	94	57				1	2	0	20	0	43	
<b>MEXICO, 1996</b>																
<b>Urban</b>																
10 - 14 years of age	2	2	1	1	1	1				96	96	96	1	1	2	
15 - 19 years of age	7	8	6	21	27	15				62	61	63	10	4	16	
20 - 24 years of age	10	11	8	54	62	43				21	23	20	15	3	29	
25 - 29 years of age	5	6	5	71	90	54				3	3	3	21	1	38	
<b>Rural</b>																
10 - 14 years of age	8	11	5	5	7	4				81	81	81	6	2	10	
15 - 19 years of age	9	11	7	40	54	26				32	33	32	18	2	35	
20 - 24 years of age	6	6	6	62	88	42				5	5	4	28	2	48	
25 - 29 years of age	4	5	3	67	93	44				1	0	1	28	1	52	

Table III.4 (cont.3)

Country, area, age group	Economically active and not attending school				Not economically active and attending school				Not economically active and not attending school			
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)		Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	
<b>PANAMA, 1997</b>												
Urban												
10 - 14 years of age	1	1	0	0	98	98	98	1	1	1	1	1
15 - 19 years of age	8	8	8	11	68	64	72	7	3	3	10	10
20 - 24 years of age	19	19	19	41	19	16	22	9	2	2	18	18
25 - 29 years of age	15	14	15	56	4	3	5	13	2	2	24	24
Rural												
10 - 14 years of age	1	2	1	1	92	91	93	4	2	2	5	5
15 - 19 years of age	5	5	4	18	44	43	45	17	3	3	34	34
20 - 24 years of age	6	6	7	34	8	4	12	21	1	1	47	47
25 - 29 years of age	5	4	6	42	1	0	3	23	1	1	50	50
<b>PARAGUAY, 1996</b>												
Urban												
10 - 14 years of age	12	19	5	1	83	77	91	2	1	1	3	3
15 - 19 years of age	25	31	19	22	38	30	47	8	5	5	12	12
20 - 24 years of age	18	19	16	50	8	6	11	13	2	2	23	23
25 - 29 years of age	7	10	4	73	1	1	1	12	2	2	22	22
<b>DOMINICAN REP. 1997</b>												
Urban												
10 - 14 years of age	6	8	4	0	91	88	94	2	2	2	2	2
15 - 19 years of age	25	34	18	11	50	37	61	7	3	3	10	10
20 - 24 years of age	24	27	21	47	11	8	14	11	3	3	19	19
25 - 29 years of age	14	13	14	56	4	2	5	13	1	1	25	25
Rural												
10 - 14 years of age	6	9	4	1	91	87	94	3	3	3	2	2
15 - 19 years of age	20	26	13	10	42	33	51	13	3	3	25	25
20 - 24 years of age	10	11	9	45	6	2	11	17	1	1	35	35
25 - 29 years of age	5	6	4	43	2	1	2	25	3	3	51	51
<b>URUGUAY, 1997</b>												
Urban												
10 - 14 years of age	1	1	1	1	95	95	95	3	3	3	4	4
15 - 19 years of age	14	15	13	20	48	43	54	10	7	7	13	13
20 - 24 years of age	17	16	19	52	10	7	13	10	3	3	16	16
25 - 29 years of age	12	11	13	63	3	2	4	11	3	3	19	19



Table III.4 (concl.)

Country, area, age group	Economically active and attending school			Economically active and not attending school			Not economically active and attending school			Not economically active and not attending school		
	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Both sexes (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
<b>VENEZUELA, 1997</b>												
National total												
10 - 14 years of age	3	4	2	2	3	1	93	90	95	3	3	3
15 - 19 years of age	11	13	10	25	35	13	50	45	56	14	7	20
20 - 24 years of age	15	15	15	55	70	38	17	12	23	13	3	23
25 - 29 years of age	11	10	13	71	85	55	5	3	7	13	2	25

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of household surveys for the respective countries.

## **B. KEY AREAS IN SOCIAL INTEGRATION**

The topic of youth social integration can be analysed from several angles. Here, three key dimensions have been chosen: education, employment and health. Other factors are also highly relevant, but sufficient information is not available for undertaking a fairly rigorous analysis.

### **1. Access to the education system and number of years of schooling: progress and limitations**

Education is a key component in an individual's quality of life. As mentioned in the first chapter, considerable progress has been achieved in this area with regard to what is generally called coverage. At the same time, however, serious shortcomings are found in terms of educational quality and social equity with respect to different social groups' access to education.

Enrollment data clearly demonstrate the progress that has been achieved in the area of coverage over the last half century: in 1950 secondary enrollment barely incorporated 1.5 million young people, whereas in 1970 the number of enrolled students surpassed the 10 million mark. In terms of crude enrollment rates, this implies that while in 1960, rates above 20% were only seen in the countries that had modernized early (namely, Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay, as well as Panama and Venezuela), in 1980 no country, with the exception of Guatemala, registered levels below that figure.

More current data indicate that the process continued even in the context of the crisis of the 1980s, and crude secondary school enrollment rates increased from 45% in 1980 to 53% in 1990. Net enrollment rates, however, were around 15% in Brazil and several Central American countries; close to 25% in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela; as high as 55% to 60% in the Southern Cone and Cuba; and even 70% in the majority of the English-speaking Caribbean countries (Moura Castro and Carnoy, 1997). More recent studies indicate that the trend continued in the 1990s, but at decidedly slower pace (UNDP, 1998a). Thus, much work remains despite recorded progress.

In the case of higher education, the expansion of enrollment was much more marked. Whereas in 1950 only 266,000 students participated at this level, in 1980 nearly 5.5 million students were enrolled. This means that barely 1.9% of youth in the 20- to 24-year-old age group pursued higher education in 1950, rising to almost 17% in 1980. Here again, countries display sharp differences. In 1950 only Argentina and Uruguay presented levels above 5%, while in 1980 all the countries analysed were above this level. Similarly, no country surpassed 10% enrollment in 1950, but 17 countries demonstrated that level in 1980. This rising trend was maintained over the last two decades, albeit at a slower pace. Women's enrollment, in particular, improved steadily, and it has already reached a majority level in several countries of the region.

Thus, over the course of just a few decades, secondary and higher education were transformed from elitist institutions of youth training and socialization into social spaces accessible by a much broader, heterogeneous segment of the youth population. Within the existing framework of strategies for upward social mobility, these youth wagered on substantially improving their levels of well-being and their socio-economic status, on the basis of attaining the highest educational level possible.

However, the pedagogic model designed for an elite student base continued to be applied throughout the process of extending coverage to the masses, and it came to be increasingly inefficient in

terms of educational results. This is apparent in the increasing levels of repetition and the excessive number of years spent in the education system, among other indices, as well as in the curriculum's low degree of relevance. The pedagogic model took as its point of departure certain assumptions regarding the young people in the system, assumptions which were no longer valid in the face of increasing heterogeneity. These included the possibility of investing many years in institutionalized education; the intellectual capacity to undertake broad abstractions and to extrapolate from the general to the particular and from the theoretical to the practical throughout the educational cycle; and a family environment favourable to the educational climate. Such conditions were common among integrated households, but not among the excluded households that had recently been incorporated into the education system.

These circumstances, combined with the severe budget cuts in education that occurred within the framework of adjustment, produced a very serious deterioration in educational quality, which can be seen in rising student failure rates. Several comparative analyses carried out in recent years clearly demonstrate that Latin America and the Caribbean is lagging in many of these areas not only with respect to the highly industrialized countries, but also in relation to the South-East Asian countries.

The region exhibits wide variation both within and among countries in these and other areas. A study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which compared seven countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela), found that on average, students from the lower socio-economic levels scored 44% on a mathematics test, in comparison to an average of 59% for students from the upper socio-economic levels. Corresponding scores on a language test were 48% and 72%, respectively (UNESCO, 1996).

These data reflect the existence of a sharp segmentation among schools of wide-ranging quality levels. According to Moura Castro and Carnoy (1997), such results stem not only from the family environment, but also from the large variation in the quality of schools within countries. Although some students continue to be completely excluded from basic education, particularly in the poorer countries in the region, segmentation in the 1990s mostly involves differential access to educational quality. The vast majority of students attend schools of very low quality, and the poor in particular are excluded from anything approximating a high-quality education. In contrast, the educational quality of elitist schools is comparable to that of the advanced countries (Moura Castro and Carnoy, 1997).

To address this situation, several countries in the region have implemented educational reforms in recent years in an attempt to increase the volume of resources available for education and, at the same time, to improve teacher training, increase the supply of instructional materials in schools, extend the number of years that students stay in school and improve and expand the available infrastructure whenever necessary and possible. Although the time frame is still too short to evaluate the reforms, the most recent studies find evidence of progress in some specific areas (improved budgetary balances, for example), but dramatic improvements have not been registered with regard to educational quality, except in those cases in which school capacities have been significantly reinforced. When the decentralization of education has gone forward without the technical and financial support of the central government, it has in fact reduced educational quality even further, especially for the poorest sectors of the population and in the most depressed areas.

## 2. Youth entry into the labour force: uncertainty, exclusion, discrimination

The availability of stable, good-quality jobs is another important factor in one's quality of life. Unemployment and underemployment are structurally higher among women and youth, which is a very problematic feature of the youth experience. The data speak for themselves: youth unemployment is double total unemployment, at least triple adult unemployment and in some cases as much as five times the unemployment level of the population aged 45 years and older. Seen from another angle, the figures indicate that youth make up around 50% of the total unemployed population in almost every country in the region.

Such has been the pattern over the last 40 years, in cycles of economic expansion as well as periods of crisis, and in the context of a wide range of development strategies. This does not occur because young people constitute a high percentage of the economically active population; in fact, youth aged 15 to 24 represent between a fifth and a third of the labour force in Latin America. In some countries with high fertility levels, such as Brazil, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic, the participation rate exceeds 25%, but in countries with low fertility rates, youth participation in the economically active population is correspondingly lower.

Data published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the *Panorama laboral de Latin America y el Caribe 1999* indicate that youth unemployment is high in almost all the countries of the region. Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela display especially high rates for the 15- to 24-year-old age group: 29.5% in Panama and 27.9% in both Uruguay and Venezuela. The most troubling situation is that of youth aged 15 to 19, whose unemployment rates reach 37% in Colombia, 35.9% in Argentina and 28.2% in Chile. Other countries exhibit relatively high growth of unemployment rates, although their 1999 levels are comparatively lower. Such is the case for Brazil, where unemployment in the 18- to 24-year-old age group grew from 9% in 1991 to 15% in 1999. Mexico, which enjoys the lowest unemployment levels in the region, halved its rates between 1995 and 1999, from 13% to 6% in the 12- to 19-year-old age group and from 9.9% to 4.8% in the 20- to 24-year-old age group. The Caribbean countries suffer extremely high levels of youth unemployment, although the methodology for measuring unemployment is different from that used elsewhere and data thus are not strictly comparable. Among youth aged 15 to 24, the unemployment rate in 1998 was 25% both in Barbados and in Trinidad and Tobago, and it was 34% in Jamaica (see table III.5).

**Table III.5**  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, 1990-1999**  
*(Average annual rates)*

Country	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>Latin America</b>										
<b>Argentina <sup>a</sup></b>	21.7	16.3	16.4	26.8	32.3	46.6	44.3	39.7	35.0	35.9
15-19 years of age	15.2	12.3	13.0	...	21.2	30.1	31.1	27.2	24.4	26.4
<b>Bolivia <sup>b</sup></b>	13.3	13.1	8.3	8.6	4.9	5.0	7.0	...	...	...
10-19 years of age	9.5	7.3	7.0	8.2	4.5	5.4	...	...	...	...
<b>Brazil <sup>c</sup></b>	...	11.6	14.4	12.2	11.9	11.0	13.0	14.3	18.8	18.4
15-17 years of age	...	9.1	11.2	10.3	9.6	9.3	10.5	11.4	14.3	15.0
<b>Chile <sup>d</sup></b>	15.9	13.7	12.6	13.0	16.8	15.8	15.0	19.9	20.8	28.2
15-19 years of age	12.0	12.4	10.3	10.2	11.9	10.1	12.2	13.6	15.1	20.5
<b>Colombia <sup>e</sup></b>	25.6	27.2	26.5	26.2	26.7	24.8	29.5	36.7	37.1	37.0
15-19 years of age	15.1	15.1	15.2	12.4	13.2	13.0	15.6	18.1	21.7	26.0
<b>Costa Rica <sup>f</sup></b>	10.4	14.1	9.3	10.2	9.8	13.5	13.9	13.1	12.8	...
<b>Ecuador <sup>f</sup></b>	13.5	18.5	17.3	15.7	14.9	15.3	20.0	19.4	22.6	...
<b>El Salvador <sup>f</sup></b>	18.6	14.6	14.3	14.4	13.5	13.3	13.1	14.6	15.0	16.4
<b>Honduras <sup>f</sup></b>	10.7	12.3	6.6	9.7	6.7	10.2	9.7	8.7	10.0	...
<b>Mexico <sup>g</sup></b>	7.0	5.0	6.9	7.3	8.3	13.1	11.5	8.4	7.0	6.0
12-19 years of age	...	...	4.4	5.7	6.0	9.9	8.8	6.5	5.9	4.8
<b>Panama <sup>h</sup></b>	...	38.8	37.0	31.6	31.1	31.9	34.8	31.5	31.7	29.5
<b>Paraguay <sup>i</sup></b>	18.4	9.0	14.1	9.8	12.3	10.8	29.1	13.7	...	...
15-19 years of age	14.1	9.5	7.3	8.8	5.5	7.8	12.6	12.7	...	...

Table III.5 (concl.)

Country	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Peru <sup>j</sup>	15.4	11.2	15.8	16.1	13.7	11.2	14.9	14.5	14.1	17.1
14-24 years of age										
Uruguay <sup>k</sup>	26.6	25.0	24.4	23.3	25.5	25.5	28.0	26.8	26.1	27.9
14-24 years of age										
Venezuela <sup>l</sup>	18.0	15.8	13.4	13.0	15.9	19.9	25.4	23.1	21.9	27.9
15-24 years of age										
El Caribe <sup>m</sup>										
Barbados	...	33.8	36.4	43.2	41.7	37.8	27.5	28.9	27.4	...
15-24 years of age										
Jamaica	30.7	29.2	28.3	29.5	28.9	34.1	34.4	34.2	...	...
15-24 years of age										
Trinidad and Tobago <sup>n</sup>	36.4	34.2	34.8	38.9	39.9	31.0	28.5	35.3	25.8	23.7
15-24 years of age										

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), on the basis of household surveys for the respective countries.

<sup>a</sup> Greater Buenos Aires; 1999 figure is for May-June.

<sup>b</sup> National urban average; age group for 1996 is 15-25 years old.

<sup>c</sup> Six metropolitan areas; 1999 figure is January-August average.

<sup>d</sup> National total average; 1999 figure is for January-September.

<sup>e</sup> Seven metropolitan areas; June of every year.

<sup>f</sup> National urban average.

<sup>g</sup> Forty-one urban areas; 1999 figure is for first three quarters.

<sup>h</sup> Metropolitan region; 1999 figure is for March.

<sup>i</sup> Asunción.

<sup>j</sup> Metropolitan Lima area; from 1996, national urban average; 1999 figure is for first quarter.

<sup>k</sup> Montevideo; 1999 figure is for January-September average.

<sup>l</sup> Urban national average; 1999 figure is national total for first quarter.

<sup>m</sup> The methodology used by the Caribbean countries to measure open unemployment differs from used by the other countries of the region.

This topic is analyzed fairly thoroughly in the ECLAC *Social Panorama of Latin America, 1998*: "If the unemployment of young people is analyzed on the basis of the income levels of their households, it will be seen that during the period 1990-1997 the ratio between the rates in the poorest and richest quartiles has increased in 8 out of 12 countries studied; this gap has narrowed only in Brazil, Venezuela and Ecuador, while in Uruguay it has remained stable. There are some striking differences across countries. For example, in Honduras in 1997 the rate of unemployment for the first income quartile was 13.1 times more than it was for the fourth (highest income) quartile, and there was also a significant gap in Argentina (9.5) and Bolivia (8.3). This ratio underscores the fact that the burden of unemployment is falling mainly on these vulnerable groups. In Argentina, the rate of open unemployment in urban areas was nearly 50% in 1997 among young people in the poorest quartile, whereas it was 24.3% for all young people as a group; a similar ratio may be seen in Colombia and Panama, although in Panama the figures should be viewed within the context of the country's overall high rates of youth unemployment" (ECLAC, 1999b) (see table III.6).

Table III.6

**LATIN AMERICA (12 COUNTRIES): URBAN OPEN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR PEOPLE  
BETWEEN THE AGES OF 15 AND 24, BY SEX AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME LEVEL, 1990 AND 1997 <sup>a</sup>**

Country	Total			Quartile 1			Quartile 2			Quartile 3			Quartile 4		
	1990	1997		1990	1997		1990	1997		1990	1997		1990	1997	
Argentina <sup>b</sup>															
	Both sexes	13.2	24.3	27.7	45.7		13.4	27.5		8.2	16.0		4.7	4.8	
	Men	11.5	21.1	25.2	40.8		8.7	21.5		8.5	13.2		4.3	2.4	
	Women	16.1	29.2	31.7	54.9		22.7	37.1		7.5	19.8		5.3	7.9	
Bolivia <sup>c</sup>															
	Both sexes	19.3	8.5	37.8	16.5		20.0	9.2		15.1	6.9		9.7	2.0	
	Men	18.4	7.5	37.8	16.1		19.1	8.6		13.2	4.8		10.1	2.3	
	Women	20.6	9.9	37.8	17.0		21.4	9.9		17.9	10.0		9.1	1.3	
Brazil <sup>d</sup>															
	Both sexes	8.6	15.3	14.0	22.7		8.4	14.9		6.5	11.4		4.7	10.1	
	Men	8.8	12.8	14.8	18.4		7.7	12.0		6.5	9.8		4.9	9.3	
	Women	8.3	19.1	12.6	29.4		9.5	19.2		6.4	13.8		4.3	11.1	
Chile <sup>d</sup>															
	Both sexes	18.5	13.5	35.2	25.8		18.8	12.9		9.0	7.9		8.2	5.8	
	Men	17.0	10.7	31.3	21.9		17.3	8.7		8.2	5.7		6.4	3.8	
	Women	20.8	18.0	42.7	33.8		21.5	19.6		10.2	11.1		10.5	8.4	
Colombia															
	Both sexes	21.7	25.5	34.1	44.0		22.8	24.3		14.7	17.6		13.1	15.0	
	Men	18.0	20.7	27.9	35.1		18.4	18.1		11.7	14.0		11.9	16.1	
	Women	26.9	31.5	43.4	55.4		28.8	32.5		19.0	21.9		14.4	13.7	
Costa Rica															
	Both sexes	10.6	13.1	23.5	26.7		9.7	11.3		6.4	10.3		6.4	6.2	
	Men	9.8	11.4	25.0	24.5		6.2	10.3		5.5	8.3		6.9	4.7	
	Women	11.8	16.4	20.7	30.2		16.4	13.7		7.6	14.1		5.5	8.6	



Table III.6 (concl.)

	Total		Quartile 1		Quartile 2		Quartile 3		Quartile 4	
	1990	1997	1990	1997	1990	1997	1990	1997	1990	1997
Ecuador										
Both sexes	14.1	19.7	27.2	32.1	13.1	19.6	11.8	15.6	6.7	8.7
Men	11.2	15.1	22.3	26.4	10.1	13.2	8.9	12.1	5.0	7.6
Women	19.2	27.2	36.8	40.1	19.2	31.5	16.8	22.6	9.2	10.1
Honduras										
Both sexes	11.2	9.4	20.6	19.6	15.3	11.0	7.2	5.8	3.7	1.5
Men	11.5	9.2	20.4	18.7	15.6	9.9	5.6	5.3	4.4	1.8
Women	10.7	9.7	21.0	21.2	14.9	12.9	10.1	6.7	3.1	1.1
Mexico <sup>e</sup>										
Both sexes	9.9	12.5	16.6	18.9	9.1	12.3	3.6	7.3	8.7	5.7
Men	10.1	13.8	16.9	21.1	8.9	12.2	3.3	8.2	8.1	6.4
Women	9.6	10.3	15.8	14.4	9.3	12.4	4.2	5.7	9.7	4.8
Panama <sup>f</sup>										
Both sexes	37.4	31.5	47.5	45.0	40.1	31.8	29.0	26.8	24.2	17.4
Men	32.0	26.8	39.7	36.9	32.9	25.6	27.6	22.6	19.5	17.9
Women	47.1	39.7	63.5	61.3	52.6	43.4	31.3	33.7	31.5	16.8
Uruguay										
Both sexes	24.7	26.4	35.8	35.5	21.8	25.3	17.4	17.8	15.7	15.4
Men	22.2	21.8	33.2	28.9	18.8	21.3	13.8	15.1	14.6	12.2
Women	28.5	33.1	39.8	44.8	25.9	30.8	23.1	22.0	17.1	19.7
Venezuela										
Both sexes	18.4	20.0	36.1	33.6	19.9	20.5	12.9	14.5	6.5	12.2
Men	17.8	16.4	34.2	30.0	18.8	16.6	12.2	11.0	6.6	8.7
Women	19.9	27.5	42.5	44.0	23.7	28.3	15.0	21.8	6.5	18.4

Source: ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America, 1998*.<sup>a</sup> Does not include live-in domestic employees.<sup>b</sup> Greater Buenos Aires.<sup>c</sup> 1989-1997.<sup>d</sup> 1990-1996.<sup>e</sup> 1992-1996.<sup>f</sup> 1991-1997

In that same study, ECLAC asserts that “unemployment among young people who do not attend school is highest among those from low-income households. In Argentina, for example, an increase of 6 percentage points between 1990 and 1997 in the proportion of young people from poor households who are not attending school correlates with an increase of more than 15 points in the rate of unemployment, while in Brazil the rate of unemployment has gone up by 8 points within a context of reduced activity caused, in particular, by the fact that the female participation rate has ceased to rise. Mexico shows an increase of 3 points in the unemployment rate for young people from poor households who are not attending school while the participation rate remained stable during this period” (ECLAC, 1999b) (see table III.7).

Table III.7  
LATIN AMERICA (12 COUNTRIES): URBAN LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT  
RATES FOR PEOPLE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 15 AND 24 FROM POOR HOUSEHOLDS  
WHO ARE NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL <sup>a</sup>

Country	Year	Participation rate	Unemployment rate
Argentina <sup>b</sup>	1990	58.6	40.0
	1997	64.6	55.4
Bolivia	1989	61.5	24.1
	1997	69.1	10.5
Brazil	1990	64.5	13.3
	1996	60.7	21.4
Chile	1990	52.6	31.9
	1996	52.0	31.1
Colombia	1990	63.4	30.5
	1997	66.6	36.3
Costa Rica	1990	55.0	24.3
	1997	46.7	34.9
Ecuador	1990	64.4	16.3
	1997	70.8	25.1
Honduras	1990	61.0	14.8
	1997	68.4	13.1
Mexico	1992	64.6	16.4
	1996	64.7	19.4
Panama	1991	64.2	43.6
	1997	66.4	43.7
Uruguay	1990	69.5	39.5
	1997	67.1	45.3
Venezuela	1990	51.4	34.8
	1997	64.5	27.6

Source: ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America*, 1998.

<sup>a</sup> Does not include live-in domestic employees.

<sup>b</sup> Greater Buenos Aires.

By intersecting the variables of education and employment status, at least three large groups of young people can be identified:

(i) Adolescents and youth who work and cannot continue their studies (around two-thirds of those who have managed to find work). The majority of youth in this category work to supplement their household incomes, but this prevents them from obtaining more and better training which would allow them to aspire to higher incomes in the future.

(ii) Youth who neither study nor work. This group has decreased numerically since the early 1990s, but it still comprises—in the case of men aged 15 to 24 who are not independent— between 12% and 40% in poor households and between 2% and 10% in more affluent households.

(iii) Youth with less than 10 years of schooling who have left the education system. Ten years are generally considered necessary for obtaining urban jobs with the productivity and remuneration associated with an acceptable level of well-being. While this category has shrunk, it continues to account for anywhere between 20% and 54% of the total; the situation is more serious in the lowest income quartile, where the rate is between 38% and 82%, depending on the country.

Although each group faces its own set of problems, in all three cases the situation is as complex as it is worrisome. This represents a real challenge for the design and application of public policy, especially given that the future outlook for the labour market is not very encouraging, first because economic growth itself has not yet achieved sustainability and second because the creation of new jobs increasingly widens the gap between high- and low-skill workers. Furthermore, the brunt of job creation continues to fall on the informal sector. According to ILO, in the period 1990-1998, this sector created 6 of 10 new jobs; the other four corresponded to the modern private sector, as the public sector did not generate new positions during the period (ILO, 1999).

### **3. Youth and health: high-risk behaviour and access to specific services**

Another key area affecting the standard of living of Latin American and Caribbean youth is related to health. At least three areas merit attention: reproductive health, drug use and mortality trends (largely associated with traffic accidents and homicides). The following analysis is based on data published by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in its *Informe sobre la salud en las Américas 1998*, which is summarized in table III.8.

**Table III.8**  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SELECTED COUNTRIES: REPRODUCTIVE**  
**HEALTH INDICATORS FOR 15- TO 19-YEAR-OLD WOMEN**

	A	B	C	D
Brazil 1996	39	61	13	35
Bolivia 1994	43	57	2	44
Colombia 1995	42	62	8	39
Guatemala 1996	56	61	2	45
Haiti 1994-1995	45	62	2	36
Paraguay 1995-1996	46	71	31	41
Peru 1996	38	53	5	26
Dominican Republic 1996	53	59	8	41

Source: Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), *Informe sobre la salud en las Américas 1998*, Washington D.C., 1998.

- A – Percentage of women in a consensual union before the age of 20.  
 B – Percentage of women who had sexual relations before the age of 20.  
 C – Percentage of women who use modern contraceptives.  
 D – Percentage of women who became pregnant before the age of 20.

With regard to reproductive health, the report establishes that in the last two decades, the region saw a shift from marriage to consensual unions, together with an increase in the age at which couples marry. According to the report, the tendency to marry later is linked to the improved social status of women and their greater scholastic achievement. The average age for marriage in Latin America and the Caribbean is currently around 22, and although the figure varies among and within countries, on average 17% of the region's female population aged 15 to 19 is married. Data from demographic and health surveys show that in 1996, the percentage of women who were married or involved in a consensual union at the age of 20 ranged from 38% in Peru to 56% in Guatemala (PAHO, 1998b).

The report further indicates that the early initiation of sexual activity among adolescents of both sexes is common in the Americas. In 1996, between 40% and 60% of adolescents in North America were sexually active at the age of 16, and in 1994, 40% of adolescents in El Salvador and Brazil had had sexual relations at the age of 15. For Latin America as a whole, it was estimated that 50% of adolescents under the age of 17 were sexually active in 1996. In the eight countries included in the PAHO demographic and health surveys, between 53% and 71% of women had had sexual relations before the age of 20. Early sexual activity, together with low scholastic attainment, usually coincides with higher birth rates, according to PAHO, and it exposes adolescents to the risk of pregnancy as well as to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and other sexually transmitted diseases. The region's youth generally do not use protection against pregnancy, nor do they seek treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, as a result of social norms, financial restrictions, the attitudes of service providers, lack of confidentiality and unfamiliarity with the issues (PAHO, 1998b).

The report goes on to state that in the countries included in the demographic and health surveys, an average of 38% of women become pregnant before the age of 20. In most of the countries, teenage

mothers account for 15% to 25% of all births. The percentage of 19-year-old women with one or more children ranges from 6.4% in Colombia to 8.9% in Bolivia, 11.7% in Dominican Republic and 14.4% in Guatemala. Maternal mortality continues to be one of the primary causes of death among teenage girls, and the risk of pregnancy-related death is 50 times higher among Latin American teenagers than among their counterparts in the United States (PAHO, 1998b).

The ECLAC *Social Panorama of Latin America, 1998* contributes an important economic dimension to the analysis: "Early motherhood is concentrated in the lower-income sectors, as is evidenced by the fact that 80% of teenage mothers in urban areas and 70% in rural areas live in the poorest 50% of households. In the poorest quartile of households, more than 35% of mothers have their first child before they reach the age of 20, while in the wealthiest quartile, the proportion of women who become mothers before the age of 20 does not exceed 10%. The differences are even more pronounced if female levels of education are considered: almost half of all women who fail to complete primary education are teenage mothers, as compared with a figure of only 7% among those who finish secondary education" (ECLAC, 1998b).

With regard to drug use, the available data is very scarce and not always reliable. The PAHO report highlights partial data for two countries. According to a survey carried out in Bolivia in 1996, 11% of the 12- to 17-year-old population had taken drugs at least once and 6% were drug users at the time of the survey. Among 18- to a 24 -year-olds, the figures were 15% and 4%, respectively. The majority of Bolivian adolescents (54%) had first used drugs between the ages of 12 and 17, and an alarming 8% of children aged 5 to 11 had taken drugs. A study undertaken in four Panamanian cities indicates that in the youngest group (12 to 14 years of age), the prevalence of the abuse of analgesics was 34% and that of inhalants and sedatives was 4%; among 15- to 19-year-old adolescents, the abuse of analgesics reached 43%, while the use of marijuana (at 4%) and hypnotic substances (3%) dropped to fairly low levels. Finally, teenage tobacco use is high in Latin America and the Caribbean. For example, 57% of 15- to 19-year-olds in Peru and 41% in Cuba smoke, compared to 17% in Canada and 15% in the United States of America (PAHO, 1998b).

The subject of drugs in the region is extremely complex. Very powerful interests are involved in drug trafficking, and their manipulation of high-level public and private powers dramatically influences the economic, social and political dynamics of the region. Studies show the geopolitical importance of the issue, in particular with respect to relations between Latin America and the United States of America; they also highlight the stigmas that have been erected around the issues, which confuse simple occasional use (which is very common among young people ) with addiction (which is much more restricted in terms of the size of the problem) and even with drug trafficking itself (Hopenhayn, 1997).

Turning now to the third topic of this section, namely, that of mortality, the PAHO report again provides the basis for analysis. Data on the region's 1997 mortality rates show that the primary causes of death among 10- to 14-year-old children are accidents, violence, malignant tumors and infectious diseases. In the 15- to 19-year-old population, in contrast, the primary causes of death are accidents, homicide, suicide, malignant tumors, heart disease and complications during pregnancy, birth and the post-natal period. The report further indicates that mortality rates are higher for young men than for young women. For example, the risk of death from accident and homicide is three and six times greater, respectively, for young men than for young women (PAHO, 1998b).

The PAHO report examines the issue of violence at length. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 28.7% of deaths caused by homicide occur among 10- to 19-year-old adolescents. In 10 of the 21

countries in the region with a population of more one million, homicide is the second-most-common cause of death in the 15- to 24-year-old age group, and it is one of the five primary causes in 17 of those countries. Homicide rates are highest among 15- to 24-year-old men. Countries with high homicide rates among men in this age group include Colombia (267 per 100,000 inhabitants), Puerto Rico (93), Venezuela (69) and Brazil (72). The countries with intermediate levels are Mexico (41 per 100,000), the United States (38), Panama (32), Ecuador (26), Trinidad and Tobago (21), Cuba (18) and Argentina (11). Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica and Canada have low homicide rates (PAHO, 1998b).

PAHO stresses that while premature, violent death among young people represents a social and economic loss, this is just one aspect of the problem. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that for every child or adolescent who dies under traumatic circumstances, 15 others are gravely affected by the incident and another 30 to 40 suffer damages that require medical or psychological treatment or rehabilitation. Additionally, violence during adolescence is not limited to physical trauma, but rather includes sexual, emotional and verbal abuse, neglect, threats, sexual aggression and other forms of psychological abuse (PAHO, 1998b).

### **C. INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF OPPORTUNITIES**

The issue of young people's standard of living is situated within a wider, more complex socio-economic context, and its analysis is based to a large extent on the individual's household of origin. The ECLAC *Social Panorama of Latin America, 1997* rigorously documented these interrelations. A summary of the principal findings is pertinent within the framework of this chapter.

#### **1. Intergenerational transmission of educational capital**

"At least one half of all Latin Americans find that their opportunities for well-being are limited very early on in their lives due to the effects of the intergenerational transmission of educational capital and job opportunities, which, in conjunction with other phenomena, are decisive factors in the high and persistent levels of socio-economic inequality existing in the region." (ECLAC, 1998b). This categorical, irrefutable statement is based on the analysis of a group of indicators that clearly support the argument.

On the basis of the data available for Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, ECLAC holds that in general, "80% of urban youths come from households where the parents' educational capital is inadequate (less than 10 years of schooling) and 60% to 80% of those youths do not attain the basic educational threshold required for achieving well-being, which, while varying from country to country, is in general currently assessed at around 12 years of schooling. This means that between approximately 48% and 64% of young Latin Americans from urban areas find their future opportunities restricted by their home background. Opportunities for young people who live in rural areas are even more limited, since the percentage of this group that does not manage to accrue a basic minimum of educational capital is similar to the figure for urban areas, even though the threshold is set at a lower level. Throughout their lives, this high percentage of young people who inherit an inadequate level of educational capital will be confined to poorly-paid jobs, a situation which limits their opportunities for well-being and those of the households to which they belong" (ECLAC, 1998b).

To arrive at this conclusion, ECLAC developed a methodology for measuring the phenomenon within specific parameters. The analysis takes as its starting point the number of years of education attained by the parents and children, which is declared in the household surveys of the different countries. It then incorporates an adjustment for the devaluation of education suffered as a result of increasing coverage, given that more and more years of study are necessary to achieve the same occupational entry level and the same income as in the past. The results are striking: "While, on average, young people receive three more years of schooling than their parents did, since the figure has increased from 6.5 to 10 years in urban areas and from 3 to 6.5 years in rural areas, only one third of all urban youths and one tenth of rural youths are able to both surpass their parents' level of education to a significant degree and attain a satisfactory level of schooling" (ECLAC, 1998b).

ECLAC outlines a second important conclusion with regard to the transmission of educational capital between parents and children: "Despite the notable expansion of educational coverage in the region, over the last 15 years young people of different social strata have continued to face sharp disparities in terms of their opportunities for acquiring a level of education that would afford them a basic minimum of well-being. Currently, only about 20% of the young people whose parents did not complete their primary education manage to complete the secondary cycle; in contrast, over 60% of the children whose parents had 10 years of schooling or more do complete secondary school" (ECLAC, 1998b).

These disparities are even sharper in countries with relatively low levels of educational coverage. In Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela, just one in every six young people (about 17%) whose parents have less than six years of education finish secondary schooling. In contrast, three out of four young people whose parents have more than 12 years of study reach that level. In countries with higher levels of educational coverage —namely, Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Panama and Uruguay— 30% of the children whose parents have less than six years of study finish secondary education, while 85% of the children of parents with six years or more reach this level. At the same time, the proportion of youth who complete 12 years of study or more reaches, on average, 51%, easily surpassing the level found in the first group, which averages 29%.

In addition to these quantitative factors, qualitative elements reinforce the inequalities discussed above. A study by UNESCO (1996) indicates that while on average student scores are barely 50% of the level stipulated in the official curriculum, students in private schools easily earn marks of nearly 100%. Furthermore, an analysis of the responses given on reading and writing exams indicates that two out of five students in the fourth and fifth grades do not understand what they read and that these students come from families in the lower socio-economic strata. This points to serious equity problems in the quality of education in the region (UNESCO, 1996). All of the evaluations carried out in recent years in Latin America and the Caribbean confirm this type of diagnosis.

## **2. Educational capital and occupational opportunities**

This section again draws heavily on the analysis developed in the *Social Panorama of Latin America, 1997*, in which ECLAC reaches the following conclusion: "Young people's occupational profile reflects the decisive influence exerted by the socio-economic and educational position of the household of origin on opportunities for well-being. People who grow up in low-income households find it difficult to rise above the rank of manual worker, whereas those from more affluent households normally work in

professional, technical or management positions, and are assured of entering the labour market at the level of at least a clerical or sales position" (ECLAC, 1998b).

The evidence used to support this conclusion speaks for itself. In urban areas, professionals, technicians and managers generally predominate among youth with 12 or more total years of study: 55% in Brazil, 52% in Colombia, 51% in Costa Rica, 49% in Honduras, 44% in Uruguay and 42% in Chile (13 years or more in the last two cases). In rural areas, the figures are as follows: 69% in Honduras, 54% in Colombia and Costa Rica, 49% in Brazil and 42% in Chile. Urban incomes for this groups range from 5 to 12 times the value of the poverty line. In the intermediate group, composed of youth with 9 to 11 total years of study, the situation is not much better than in the most vulnerable group: slightly more than 40% in urban areas manage to find good jobs, mostly as administrative clerks, bookkeepers, sales people or shop assistants, but their average monthly income is only between 3 and 3.5 times the poverty line; at the same time, more than 50% work as factory workers, manual workers, security guards, waiters or domestic employees, with an average income of 2.5 to 3.5 times the poverty line.

Among youth with 8 years of schooling or less, at least 80% work as manual workers, security guards, waiters or domestic employees, with an average monthly income of 2 to 2.5 times the poverty line; this is "insufficient to ensure their family's well-being" (ECLAC, 1998b). In the cases of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras and Uruguay, the concentration of young people with 8 years of education or less in these occupations ranges from 77% in urban areas for Brazil to 88% in Chile. In rural areas, over 90% of youth who have attained this level of education work as agricultural labourers, manual workers, security guards, waiters, or domestic employees, earning an average monthly income of 2 to 3 times the poverty line.

These figures lead ECLAC to point out the presence of "a very high degree of homogeneity in the link among education, occupation and income, which delineates the socio-economic stratification found in the region," which in turn highlights the need to promote "a significant increase in equity in terms of the educational attainment of children and young people from lower-income sectors, since this is the only type of capital that they will inherit." As a corollary to the above statements, the *Social Panorama* makes a categorical assessment of the future prospects in these areas: "Even assuming that present conditions of sustained economic growth remain constant, most countries of the region stand little chance of seeing any major improvement over the next 10 years in the pattern of income distribution" (ECLAC, 1998b).

The report explains the assessment as follows: "This is because labour income —the main component of income distribution— is determined by an occupational profile that has already, to a large extent (80%), been established," given that "the entry of new individuals into the economically active population and the exit of others from this category modify its composition at a rate of 2% to 3% per year." The report goes on to indicate that "in most recent cases of growth, the gap has widened between the wage levels for the most common occupations among the top 10% of income earners, which improved by 8% per year, and those of the bottom 40% of income earners, which rose by 3.5% per year" (ECLAC, 1998b).

The report's analysis is based on data from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras and Uruguay, but the situation is probably very similar in the majority of the countries that were not included for lack of statistical data. In Chile, the average annual growth rate of income in occupations with adequate benefits was 12.3% during the period 1990-1994, while that for occupations with inadequate benefits was only 6%. The differential is also quite high in Colombia (6.1% and 1.5%, respectively). At



the other extreme, Uruguay exhibits a remarkably lower degree of variation (6.2% and 5.7%, respectively), as does Costa Rica (3.5% and 1.6%, respectively).

The report concludes that "In the coming years, the disparity between the wages paid for high- and low-skilled jobs will probably remain constant or even increase notwithstanding the achievement of desirable levels of sustained growth (over 5% per year). This inertial force, which perpetuates income concentration, not only poses increasing challenges in terms of policies to promote a more equitable pattern of distribution, but also calls for greater efforts to forestall an increase in the prevailing inequality seen in most countries" (ECLAC, 1998b).

### 3. The influence of family contacts

Another characteristic that is useful for measuring the extent to which the household of origin determines youth labour trends is that tied to the role of the network of family contacts for obtaining employment and —above all— the associated remuneration level achieved. To measure this variable, the *Social Panorama* analyses the average earnings of youth with 12 or more years of education, distinguishing between those whose parents have 9 years of education or less and those whose parents have ten years or more.

The report uses data from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Uruguay to support the following argument: "Above a certain level of education, the intergenerational transmission of opportunities for well-being is influenced by social contacts derived from the household of origin. The fact that some households have more influential connections results in their children receiving, on average, 30% more income although they may work in the same occupational categories and have similar levels of education" (ECLAC, 1998b).

In terms of the poverty line, youth whose parents have less than 9 years of education earn an income equivalent to 4.1 times the poverty line; the figure rises to 5.6 times value of the poverty line in the case of youth whose parents have more than 10 years of education. In Chile, the first group earns 3.6 times the poverty line, while incomes in the second group are 6.1 times as high as the poverty line. In Brazil, the values are 4.3 and 6.1 times the poverty line, respectively, while in Colombia, the respective figures are 3.7 and 5.4 times the poverty line.

The report classifies employment into three categories: professionals and technicians; administrative and accounting clerks; and salespersons and shop assistants. The differences are not so striking as to merit particular attention, although the report offers the following general conclusion: "Since there are no differences [among the youth analysed] in the average number of years of schooling depending on the type of household, there should be no differences in average income levels. The [observed] difference may therefore be attributable to social connections." (ECLAC, 1998b).

### 4. Early definition of gender roles

The ECLAC *Social Panorama* also analyses the consequences that this type of dynamics provokes in the early assumption of roles, differentiating the cases of adolescent girls and boys. The results indicate that "around 60% of young women and somewhat less than 50% of young men between the ages of 15 and 19 are able to study without having to take on any other responsibilities, which allows them to accumulate

greater educational capital. It is to be noted, however, that about half of the girls who drop out of school go on to undertake exclusively domestic tasks, whereas almost all boys who drop out of school enter the labour force, which provides them with greater skills and opportunities, almost regardless of their level of entry. In rural areas, only 36% of female adolescents and 24% of male adolescents attend school full-time" (ECLAC, 1998b).

ECLAC emphasizes that these gender differences are not related to household income level: "In the lowest-income quartile 10% more girls than boys study full-time (50% as compared to 41%). This difference is maintained in the wealthiest quartile, although at a higher level (76% as compared to 67%). The findings are similar for adolescents from households in the two intermediate quartiles. These differences result in females completing more years of schooling than males in both urban and rural areas" (ECLAC, 1998b).

In fact, the differences are related to the educational climate of the household. "In urban areas, 41% of female adolescents and 30% of male adolescents from households with very low educational attainment (where the adults have less than six years of schooling) study full-time, whereas for households with a high level (the adults have 10 or more years of schooling), the figures are 79% for females and 75% for males" (ECLAC, 1998b). In rural areas, the figures are 28% and 19% for the first group and 71% and 67% in the second.

The report also addresses the issue of the different paths taken by men and women who leave the education system early, with regard to their entry into the work force: "In the 11 countries considered, on average around 33% of males in urban areas have entered the workforce, abandoning their schooling. This situation applies to only 16% of females, because 12% of females undertake unpaid domestic work in their own households. In rural areas this phenomenon is more pronounced and the differences between the sexes are accentuated. Whereas 60% of males work and receive no schooling, this is the case for only 21% of females, since 33% of females undertake domestic tasks" (ECLAC, 1998b).

In this case, the differences in gender roles are tied to both the socio-economic capacity and the educational climate of the households. "For example, in the lowest-income quartile in urban areas 39% of males are in paid employment, but only 19% of females, because 18% of females undertake domestic tasks. On the other hand, in the highest-income quartile, the corresponding figures are 16% for males and 9% and 4%, respectively, for females. These same differences are found in both urban and rural areas in all the countries considered" (ECLAC, 1998b).

Furthermore, "the proportion of adolescents aged between 15 and 19 in this situation declines sharply as the educational environment of households improves. This underscores the fact that future chances for well-being are not exclusively determined by economic restrictions at this stage of life: they are also much affected by the parents' aspirations for their children" (ECLAC, 1998b). In households with a low educational climate, 50% of young men and 25% of young women work, whereas the figures are 9% and 6%, respectively, among households with a high educational climate.

On the basis of these statistics, the report concludes that "a rise in the educational level in middle- and lower-income households will also have a strongly mitigating influence on the lack of equity arising from gender role differentiation in childhood and adolescence, which mainly adversely affects females who drop out of school. The better the educational environment of the household, the higher the value placed on the children's education and the more equitable its view of roles; this not only increases

but also tends to equalize the chances for well-being of males and females from childhood on" (ECLAC, 1998b).

#### **D. FORMS OF YOUTH REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION**

Young people who are currently 15 to 24 years old are children of the adjustment and democratization. They were born between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s, and they grew up during the period of structural reforms and adjustment that has occurred over the last 15 years. They did not personally experience the student riots of the 1960s or the antidictatorial protests in the Southern Cone and the Central American civil war of the 1970s and early 1980s. Only the older ones saw the televised reports of the fall of the Berlin Wall and could clearly understand its historical significance. However, the majority enjoy—or at least are aware of—the existence of highly globalized cultural consumption.

Without question, they were born and raised in a context that is markedly different from that of their parents. But what are these young people really like? What do they think of the country in which they live? Do they value democracy? What are their hopes for the future? Are they all the same or are there sharp differences among distinct youth subgroups? How do adults view them? Some specific surveys carried out in the last decade in several countries of the region (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela), as well as other more generic studies undertaken in a broader group of countries in recent years, point to possible answers, albeit partial and preliminary ones.

##### **1. Youth movements and organizations: diversity and impermanence**

The majority of Latin American and Caribbean youth is completely outside existing youth movements and organizations. Barely 5% to 20% claim to participate regularly in an organization, depending on the country and the moment in which the survey was carried out. The vast majority of those who participate do so in sports or religious organizations. Aside from occasionally attending rock concerts or other similar musical events, the activities they pursue in their free time mainly have to do with "spending time with friends," watching television or going to the movies or out dancing.

Such are the results of youth surveys realized in Argentina (1993 and 1997), Bolivia (1996), Chile (1994 and 1997), Costa Rica (1996), Paraguay (1998), Uruguay (1990 and 1995) and Venezuela (1992). Similar findings emerge from several public opinion polls carried out by different private firms in a wider range of countries. These surveys show that youth presence in political parties, student movements, syndicates and other social organizations is weak; this contrasts sharply with their answers to questions about their interest in participating in such organizations, which is always higher.

This apparent contradiction is in fact logical: youth want to participate, but only under more open, horizontal rules of the game and without feeling manipulated. Here lies one of the keys for interpreting youth today (and probably of all time), because if anything can be said to characterize them—as we have already seen—it is their desire for autonomy. As they travel the road from total dependence on their parents (a condition of childhood) to total independence (a condition of adulthood), the last thing they want is to encounter more parents or guardians within youth movements and organizations. The same thing happens in a different context with professors and teachers.

Those young people who do participate demonstrate a great deal of inconsistency, measured by the length of time they are active in different organizations. In the majority of cases, participation takes the form of specific activities during specific periods of time, rather than a stable, effective affiliation with these entities. This points to another characteristic of young people: they live the present moment to the fullest, without giving too much thought in their daily lives to the medium or long term. The paradox is that adults always associate young people with the future.

If the surveys were less rigorous in their definition of youth movements and organizations, taking into account participation in more informal, ephemeral structures such as cliques of friends or fan groups for fashionable artists, it is probable that the percentage of participation and length of affiliation would rise. Most surveys, however, are designed by people who were young in the 1960s and 1970s; they were thus socialized in a different historic context, and they subscribe to more rigid definitions in this area.

Peer groups are a fundamental influence in youth socialization, and young people value their opinions and attitudes highly. These groups have changed considerably with the passage of time, however, paralleling the evolution of social segregation and segmentation processes, which are especially pronounced in large cities. Thus, the heterogeneous social origins that characterized them for so long have given way to a much more homogeneous profile, which has been accompanied by a steady loss of opportunities for social mobility. On par with the segregation of both residential areas and educational establishments, groups of friends have become more homogeneous and closed; at the same time, they increasingly differentiate and distance themselves from other groups, reflecting trends in social fragmentation. Even when educational establishments maintain a degree of heterogeneity in their recruitment practices, homogeneous groups form within the establishments and then oppose one another fiercely, generating new problems in educational dynamics.

This is perhaps the most important problem that must be faced in this area. It is considerably more serious than that identified with regard to young people's presumed lack of interest in participating in formal youth movements and organizations, such as those that are promoted or managed by adults whose orientations and objectives vary widely depending on the latest idea governing their actions in each concrete case. Some organizations, especially those linked to the church, try to address these tendencies, promoting horizontal encounters and exchanges of experience among young people from different social spheres. While such activities are very important, they generally involve initiatives of limited scope. They would have to be broadened considerably to achieve any visible impact on the general trends described above.

## **2. Political participation and citizenship: Apathy, rejection or counter culture?**

The situation described above also holds for youth political participation, within the framework of exercising their rights and fulfilling their civic duties. All of the studies consulted (INJ, 1999; Morinigo, 1999; Sidicaro and Tenti, 1998; Encuestas & Estudios, 1996; Ministerio de la Familia, 1993; Rama and Filgueira, 1991) highlight the low level of interest that young people demonstrate on these issues; this can be seen in many countries in the limited electoral participation (where voting is not mandatory) and in young people's lack of confidence not only in the political parties but also in the institutions that are basic to any democratic system, such as parliament or the judicial system.

Youth opinions, however, are not so very different from those expressed by other population groups in the same surveys and on the same subjects. Adults are also highly critical, which supports the

idea that the issue touches on the fundamental limitations of the aforementioned democratic institutions; these limitations are becoming increasingly apparent, at least with regard to the long-term durability of the rules of the game within democratic electoral systems. Additional limitations arise from the precarious problem-resolution capacities of these emerging democracies. To achieve higher levels of democratic adhesion, therefore, it is necessary to deepen democracy and generate new spaces for civic participation in the development processes. Said another way, after the trend toward more market which predominated in the last decade, it is now necessary to seek a new equilibrium by consolidating a trend toward more society.

The issue is even more complex, however. Globalization has accentuated individualistic dynamics and the tendency for people to withdraw toward private spaces, which has undermined the participative processes on the social, political and group levels. Likewise, consumer practices have reinforced the propensity for conspicuous or superfluous consumption. The communications revolution incorporated everyone as a potential consumer, despite the fact that only a few can effectively realize that consumption, as a function of their real income. This creates an obvious tension between consumers and citizens, which in the case of youth is manifested in very particular ways (García Canclini, 1996).

First, their feelings about representation have clearly changed. In the 1970s, a good percentage of young people felt they were well-represented by figures affiliated with political and social processes (Che Guevara represents the most paradigmatic example). In recent decades, in contrast, they began to identify with famous singers or sports stars, which reflects the decisive influence of the communications media and the development of youth consumer practices. In the case of the popular sectors, old idols who were as distant as they were perfect have been replaced by figures who are much closer to daily life and who are more effective at facilitating immediate access to the consumption of certain goods and services (using methods outside the established legal channels); these figures include leaders of youth gangs and bands, which is evidence of an even more worrisome facet of the situation.

Second, the crisis within the public institutions most closely tied to youth—in terms of efficiency, transparency and equity in the delivery of services—directly causes young people to distance themselves from the institutions, which are increasingly perceived as riddled with serious problems of inefficiency, corruption and partiality in the allocation and distribution of goods and services. That situation has given rise to an uncritical and unconditional praising of the market, extolling the advantages of private sector dynamics as an effective response to limitations in public performance. As Emilio Tenti argues, the generalized withdrawal inward occurs within an objective context that features the effective physical, technological and moral deterioration of State institutions (e.g., national, provincial, municipal, public firms, etc.) together with a successful campaign in the area cultural ideology, in which the privatists manage to impose their representations of the world, that is, their interpretation of the crisis and their proposed solution: the privatization of everything that is privatizable (Sidicaro and Tenti, 1998).

However, the surveys under discussion also report that young people manifest a great interest in participating in the design and application of solutions to the most important problems in their local, national and international environment, which is simply politics understood as it should be and not how it actually is at the moment. This surely explains the strong interest youth display for participating in political processes when they perceive that they can have an impact on the realization of change within that process. The examples of youth support in the campaign for the Constituent in Colombia in the early 1990s and in the defense of democratic institutions in Paraguay in 1999 are paradigmatic in this sense.

This clearly reinforces the idea that efforts need to be focused on developing more society in the sense used above, in order to offset the trend to develop more market in the last decade. In the case of youth, such efforts can take many forms, but one of the most important has to do with adequately incorporating these processes into the secondary education system, which until now has either completely ignored the issues or managed them from an excessively normative basis that is rejected by young people at all levels. Again drawing on Tenti, issues that are basic for understanding the world and contemporary society (such as the productive system, the monetary system, inflation, unemployment, valid electoral systems, electoral results in recent years and the functioning of the justice system) are usually excluded from real scholastic programmes. Without such systematic training on the basis of theory and empirical data, the appearance of attitudes and aptitudes conducive to the effective participation of citizens in public life is less probable" (Sidicaro and Tenti, 1998).

We are faced with a great paradox, since graduation from secondary school coincides with the start of civic participation, most often at 18 years of age. This issue should be addressed firmly and decisively in the immediate future.

### **3. Violence as "another form" of youth participation**

Several related issues need further analysis, including the connection between working-class urban youth and various organized forms of violence. This topic, which has been analysed in diverse national contexts, is riddled with complexity, and it is advisable to avoid some of the oversimplifications that continue to characterize interpretations of the phenomenon. One such pitfall is the mechanical linking of poverty and delinquency, which treats violence as a logical outcome of poverty. The available evidence shows, however, that contrary to what this theory would suggest, the greatest expressions of violence are not concentrated in the poorest areas of the region, but rather in those contexts which combine perversely divergent social, political and economic conditions.

In reality, we are faced with an extremely complex structural problem rooted in the very culture of our countries. Many of those who carry out violent acts perceive themselves as driven, encouraged, seduced or obligated to commit them. They somehow feel manipulated, under the belief that they did not choose violence, but rather it was chosen for them. As PAHO maintains, this is true insofar as the culture of violence does not result from the manifestation of instinctive human behavior, but rather from the expression of alienated human beings. Violence is an adulteration of human relations that is allowed, generated or recreated when social institutions —such as the family, schools, groups in which one is a member, jails, the police and institutions that provide services— become distorted (De Roux, 1993).

This is clearly the case among youth. They seek to assert their identity as people, but the model that society offers them is that of the consummate consumer. They want to be recognized as individuals, but society treats them anonymously or perceives them as a danger. They are looking for fun, but they are offered only televised performances of violence and guns, first in the form of toy guns and later lethal weapons. They demand a healthy environment, but they are greeted one of deprivation, exclusion and violence. Violence is a historical phenomenon related to economic, social, legal, political, cultural and psychological conditions and processes. When laid over a foundation of poverty, the particular characteristics that each society demonstrates with regard to drug trafficking, political conflicts, social mobilization and forms of including or excluding population groups in crucial decision making processes, among many other factors, translates into varying degrees of institutional weakening or even



breakdown, alteration of the predominant ethical values and family and social decomposition (De Roux, 1993).

Without extensively reviewing data that has been highlighted elsewhere, it is important to note that all of the comparative studies to date identify Latin America as the most violent region in the world. This fact alone clearly outlines the extent of the problem. The most symptomatic and worrisome aspect of the situation is that the face of violence is almost always young, in terms of both victims and perpetrators. The *sicarios*, or hired killers, of Colombia—who will kill anyone and who accept contracts from whoever is willing to pay for this type of service—are very young (practically children), as are the thousands of members of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran *maras* (from *marabunta*, or swarm of ants), who will level anything that crosses their path in the course of their criminal activities. The armed conflicts between soldiers and guerrillas in Colombia, Mexico and Peru are similarly staged by young people, and youth also kill and die in the altercations between *barras bravas*, the fans of different football teams in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. The problem even extends to those who test their power via increasingly violent confrontations with other youth in educational establishments and discotheques in almost every country in the region.

The literature in this area is abundant, and some of the texts have already become classics (Salazar, 1993, for example). Some of the more noteworthy studies focus on youth gangs (Reguillo, 1991; Argudo, 1991), while others interpret the problem as a logical result of the disordered urban development that characterizes the largest Latin American cities (Carrión, 1995) and still others demonstrate that the problem affects not only working-class youth but also youth from the middle classes (Waiselfisz, 1998). The most current studies (Rodríguez, 1997) try to reflect the multiple facets of the problem. Here, in contrast, the goal is to highlight an aspect of the situation that has not received much attention, namely, the importance of violence as another form of youth participation.

Viewed from this angle, youth turn to violence when they have no other alternatives that would be more effective—from their point of view—for making their demands heard or for gaining access to certain goods and services which are prohibited for a variety of reasons. Similarly, they turn to violence to destroy their invisibility and demonstrate that they are capable of having an effect on social and political processes, thereby becoming an object of attention vis-à-vis public opinion and public policies. The recurrence of violence thus operates as a mechanism for getting attention when it is impossible to achieve that objective through other means (good grades in school, for example). From this perspective, when a young man does not work, does not study, does not have access to the basic recreation and health services available to integrated youth and does not receive any kind of social recognition, he can radically transform his existence through violence. He will enjoy an independent income (however irregular the means of obtaining it), acquire visibility (and may even qualify as news with regard to the communications media), earn social and community recognition (by bringing well-being to the neighborhood, finding a girlfriend more easily, etc.), and begin to play an important role within the family (by transferring the results of his new role to his mother).

#### **4. Rock music and new forms of youth expression and representation**

Rock music is very much a form of youth expression and participation. The chapter briefly touched on this issue above, but it merits additional, more specific treatment given its importance for youth. Over the last four decades, this cultural current has consolidated tremendous influence within several generations of young people, which negates any simplistic consideration of rock as a passing fad. As Rossana

Reguillo states in the prologue to a recent, rigorous study of Mexican rock, after four decades, the predictions that this strident form of music was doomed to disappear clash against evidence of the music's growing expansion and specialization, as well as the proposals, dress code and world view that have accompanied the rock phenomenon. It is impossible to think of youth cultures apart from this cultural movement, which is a global phenomenon despite local specificities (rockers were global before the label was invented) (Urteaga, 1998).

Rock music is essentially a youth phenomenon. Eva Giberti holds that the advent of rock unleashed an unimagined and unexpected power, controlled by young people and adolescents. It was the appearance of a phenomenon without adult representation, which germinated within the system it was destined to oppose. According to Giberti, it therefore qualifies as an event with a consistent political dimension, since the possibility of applying new norms in its interpretation was recognized. Its origins and the forces that sustained it, however, are difficult to identify. Embedded as it is in the unforeseeable, the event is completely missing from the record: it impedes the sequencing of events because it was an original production that shattered the known order. The emergence of a rock culture was unforeseeable, and from the moment of its development, nothing will ever be the same (see "Los hijos del rock," in Cubides, Laverde and Valderrama, 1998).

While it is true that cultural industries have to a large extent appropriated the rock phenomenon, rock is still irrefutably a factor informing youth identity, and this factor is in a permanent state of flux. Rock encompasses quite distinct forms and expressions which reflect local identities and even specific youth preferences, cross-cut by particular social and cultural differences. These specificities easily become blurred, however, in the large concerts held in almost all the large cities of the region.

From the perspective of youth public policy, it is crucial to adequately interpret the rock code. Not only does the phenomenon incorporate large numbers of young followers, but it also challenges many established institutions, which do not always react well in the face of such challenges. Confrontations between concert goers and the police are common, for example, as is the association between rock concerts and drug use, though this has never been proved to exist at the level of the group. Similarly, rock has generated and continues to generate conflicts between youth and family and between youth and school, which arise the moment that rock culture is developed around a base of codes that are radically different from the established culture. And if all of that weren't enough, the State has not always had positive experiences when national and municipal youth organizations have promoted concerts and other rock music events. Thus, public policy to date has not known how to incorporate these very particular aspects of youth culture into its specific dynamics. This must be rectified in the immediate future, if the goal is to establish public policies that draw youth closer to the dynamics of development at all levels.



## IV. THE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE

### A. ELEMENTS OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 1. Reproductive behaviour, health and rights: distinctive features of young people and adolescents

Young people are vital for the reproduction of society. They constitute, first, the replacement generations that gradually succeed older generations in the realms of production and decision-making. If young people are to be successfully incorporated into the world of work and adult life, they must first pass through a period of learning—provided, above all, by the family and the educational system—and then encounter political, cultural and employment contexts that offer them real opportunities. These issues have already been considered above.

Traditionally, young people have also been responsible for most biological reproduction, since the majority of women have their offspring between the ages of 15 and 29. Young people's decisions on reproduction therefore have a decisive influence on the demographic future of society. Those decisions, moreover, are of vital importance for the lives of young people themselves. In particular, three crucial reproductive milestones (see table IV.1)—sexual initiation, the formation of a stable union, and the onset of fertility—play a key role in the transition to adulthood, emancipation, and the search for identity that characterize youth as a bio-social phase of life. Indeed, some of these events imply assuming roles that clash with the notion of youth. The formation of a stable union and parenthood, above all, objectively entail a series of obligations that force young people to leave the "preparatory phase" of life and to adopt an adult role, whether this be in employment, domestic activity, or child-rearing.

Young people's emancipation and the transition from youth to adulthood are thus closely connected to their demographic behaviour. This connection is of the greatest importance in conceptual terms, since it helps explain the changes in the meaning of youth in various social and historical contexts. One factor that has hindered the development of youth as a distinct, institutionalized phase of the life cycle is the automatic or rapid transition from puberty to reproduction-oriented union. This was common practice in the past (before the twentieth century), and remains so among some groups in Latin America and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, it is clear that even in those social contexts in which youth is generally recognized to be a specific period of "moratorium", the duration and characteristics of this phase vary among socio-economic groups because of the differing intervals between puberty and the formation of a union (and reproduction). It seems obvious that deferral of the major milestones in the reproductive cycle mentioned above favours the consolidation and prolongation of the juvenile phase of the life cycle. This, in turn, has major and beneficial consequences for youths and for society as a whole. Young people benefit from their greater opportunities to prolong their education and extend the crucial period of character-building and identity development, while society gains through the availability of better-qualified human resources. Moreover, the mere ability to decide freely whether to delay entering a union or have children is itself an expression of youths' rights as human beings.

The prolongation of the youth phase of the life cycle, however, also has potentially negative implications. Apart from costs, such as those related to training, it involves various kinds of risk. First, there is the risk of failing to satisfy the rising expectations of an increasingly skilled and qualified workforce, as young people demand real opportunities for social and economic integration into positions in which they can apply their skills, secure the corresponding rewards, participate in decision-making, and

exercise their rights. Second, once a certain age has been reached, deferral of events in the reproductive cycle (particularly fertility) may in fact mean that the event never occurs after a certain age limit. Were this tendency to become widespread, it would result in a sociodemographic anomaly that could lead to the rapid ageing of the population, and even—in the absence of replacement cohorts—to virtual extinction.

In short, the way in which major reproductive events take place and are decided—at what age, under what conditions, with whose participation, and so on—is of decisive importance both for the nature of youth as a bio-social phase and for society as a whole.

It is also clear that the three dimensions of reproduction—behaviour, health and rights (see box IV.1)—all have particular characteristics and implications in the case of young people.

#### Box IV.1

### REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR, HEALTH AND RIGHTS

The reproductive process consists of a chain of events—biological in nature but with psychosocial determinants—which lead to the birth of new individuals. Generally speaking, this process conforms to the following logic: formation of the couple/sexual activity/regulation of fertility/pregnancy/birth. In human societies, these events take place within historical, social, and cultural contexts that endow them with specific meanings which, consequently, also form part of reproductive behaviour. The number of children (intensity of fertility) and the way in which births are distributed over the course of a woman's or a couple's life (the calendar of fertility) are often seen as the most important reproductive decisions. No less important, however, are those decisions relating to the timing and conditions under which the couple is formed, its sexual activity, and the use of birth control methods.

Reproductive health can be defined as “a general state of physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of illness or pain, in all those aspects related to the reproductive system, its functions and processes. Accordingly, reproductive health implies the capacity to enjoy a satisfactory and risk-free sex life and to procreate, as well as the freedom to decide whether or not to do so, when, and how often” (United Nations, 1997a, p.32). Reproductive health fails, therefore, when: (i) sexual activity implies a risk of illness, physical damage or unwanted pregnancy; (ii) sexual activity is not enjoyable; (iii) there is inadequate care during pregnancy and childbirth, which may therefore result in pathologies in the mother or child; (iv) the reproductive apparatus is not controlled (and controlled by the woman concerned) in order to prevent illness; and (v) specialist care is not available to treat reproduction-related diseases.

The concept of reproductive rights, finally, embraces some of the human rights recognized in United Nations documents that embody the consensus reached by the international community, and which is enshrined in members states' domestic laws. Foremost among these are the basic right that couples and individuals have to “freely and responsibly decide the number, timing, and the interval between births, and to have access to the information and methods to do so” (ibid.). Moreover, they also have a right to be able to take decisions on reproduction free from discrimination, coercion or violence. Clearly, therefore, the effective exercise of reproductive rights implies that individuals must be able to take free, responsible, and informed decisions on procreation and their sex lives. Evidently, if these conditions are to be met, different options must be available to the individual, and a full range of reproductive health services should help ensure that this is the case. The effective exercise of reproductive rights and access to reproductive health services, therefore, are basic prerequisites for the creation of social and cultural conditions favouring individuals' capacity to realize their goals and desires in the reproductive field.

**Source:** Adapted from ECLAC, Population, reproductive health and poverty (LC/G.2015 (SES.27/20)) twenty-seventh session, Oranjestad, Aruba, 11-16 May 1998.

The reproductive conduct that takes place within the couple (sexuality, birth control, pregnancy, and childbirth) have particular connotations for young people, since they play a major role in shaping their lives. However, the implications of these events vary according to the phase of youth in which they take place.

For biological, socio-economic and cultural reasons, the roles that contemporary human communities assign to teenagers do not include reproduction. As a result, the formation of stable unions and above all the onset of fertility) during adolescence infringes social norms, exposes teenagers to challenges and obligations for which they are ill-prepared, and makes it more difficult for them to meet the requirements for effective social participation —by preventing them, for example, from gaining a formal education. In short, reproduction in adolescence is an obstacle to successful social integration, and is often an exogenous factor that severely constrains the life plans of the young men and women concerned (UNPF, 1998; ECLAC, 1998c; Mensch et al., 1988; United Nations, 1996; Cage, 1995).

In later stages of youth —after the age of 20, for example— reproductive behaviour takes on different connotations insofar as it becomes biologically, culturally, and demographically normal. Childbirth, the ultimate expression of reproductive conduct, is overwhelmingly concentrated among young people aged 20-29. Much the same is true of the formation of stable unions. It is thus more likely that these events, while having a major impact on the lives of the young people concerned, can be effectively incorporated into their plans for the future. This is explained by the fact that at that age, decisions about the timing of unions or childbirth are generally taken in the context of, and form part of, pre-existing plans for the future, which the decisions will either reinforce or modify.<sup>11</sup>

Reproductive health is particularly vital during adolescence and youth, given that it is during this phase of an individual's life that his or her reproductive apparatus becomes active. It is essential, therefore, for adolescents to understand their reproductive systems, so that they may naturally assume the changes that come with puberty. Only in this way will they be in a position to avoid the risks (and above all disease) associated with the development of their sexuality, and be able to identify possible disorders or pathologies of the reproductive system. This stage of young people's lives also tends to be marked by major reproductive milestones, such as the initiation of sexual activity, the formation of a union, and the onset of fertility. For this reason, boys and girls face new dangers for the first time and confront situations in which they must be prepared to make decisions (UNPF, 1999; Monroy and Martínez, 1986).

Just as the implications of reproductive behaviour vary for young people of different ages, so too do the particular challenges posed by their reproductive health. Young people usually lack both knowledge and experience during adolescence, and are thus more likely to engage in dangerous behaviour or take reckless decisions. These problems do not disappear, but towards the end of their youth other issues become more important, notably those involving their union. In other words, by that point the main features of their desired life and reproductive plans have been defined, and young people are more knowledgeable, perceptive, mature, and autonomous. They are thus better placed to try to satisfy their reproductive health needs.

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<sup>11</sup> Evidently, the distinction drawn here between reproductive behaviour during adolescence and after a given threshold (operationally the age of 20, although in practice this could be older) represents a simplification of reality, since in some cases, the formation of a union and reproduction during adolescence could be seen as forming part of teenagers' life strategies. Equally, mechanisms exist to reduce the potentially negative impact that such behaviour may have on the lives of those concerned. On the other hand, even towards the end of youth union and reproduction may be dysfunctional for an individual's life strategies.

In exercising their reproductive rights, young people —especially teenagers— normally face a series of constraints. These stem from the limited autonomy that society usually grants them in this sphere, from the contradictory signals they receive from different social actors and institutions, and from the shortcomings of the policies intended to promote their reproductive and sexual education. Historically speaking, most societies —including those in contemporary Latin America and the Caribbean— have been very sensitive about sexual matters. In the past, the predominant normative discourse tended to confine sexual activity to stable unions formed for the purpose of reproduction. As a result, individuals tended to become sexually active, form a union, and have their first child in rapid succession. If teenagers were sexually active, it usually meant that they had married and had children while still very young.

The situation is now much more complex, as a variety of factors lead young people to defer forming a union or beginning their reproductive lives. This is not the case for sexual activity, which is encouraged by a variety of essentially indirect mechanisms such as advertising. Consequently, an increasingly large proportion of teenagers has sexual relations without being in a union or wishing to have a child. Moreover, many sexually active adolescents hide this fact from society in general and from their parents in particular. As well as being a problem for intra-family trust, this trend is often associated with unsafe sexual relations, involving the risk of infection and physical damage as well as unwanted pregnancy.

In short, teenagers are a particularly complicated group in terms of their ability to exercise their reproductive rights (even if the same is true, albeit to a lesser degree, of older youths). The values with which sexual discourses and practices are imbued should not mask the reality of sexually active teenagers who are often in no position to avoid the dangers their conduct involves and who are, in short, unable to exercise their reproductive rights.

## **2. Youth, reproduction and social inequality**

Returning to an issue touched upon earlier, and which is closely related to one of the priorities on the current social agenda, it should be noted that youth reproduction has major implications for social equality. At the macrosocial level, the reproductive behaviour of different socio-economic groups might widen the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged social strata, and might lessen the opportunities for improving human resources. At the microsocial level, variations in reproductive behaviour constitute a mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of inequalities and poverty within poor families.

At the macrosocial level, in any society it is possible to define social groups in terms of a variety of different criteria, be they economic, cultural, geographic, or ethnic. The demographic growth rates of the various strata diverge, a pattern which in the absence of other, intervening, factors shapes the demographic magnitude of the different strata. Taking a population group that is clearly disadvantaged in socio-economic terms (in this case the poor), it is clear that this group's fertility levels are systematically higher than the average. Hence this group usually displays a higher natural growth rate than the rest of the population. All other things being equal, this demographic trend means that the poor population will grow in both absolute and relative terms. Hence, in the absence of intense and sustained processes of social mobility —in this case, upward mobility out of poverty— impoverishment will inevitably spread.

There is also a polarization between the concentration of reproductive responsibilities among the most neglected social groups (the poor and the least educated), and the increasingly limited contribution of the most privileged groups (the richest and most educated quintile). There is a certain logic to this

division of labour at both the individual and social level. At the individual level, parenthood may hinder, first, the accumulation of assets such as capital, information, education and experience, and second, the use of such accumulated assets for the purposes of consumption. At the social level, it could be more beneficial and efficient for the most highly skilled human resources to devote themselves to productive activities and avoid spending their "valuable" time on child-rearing. In the long term, however, this trend is a paradox with potentially very negative social consequences. It means that child-rearing and children's primary socialization and daily interactions, all of which play a crucial role in the formation of future human resources, are mainly the responsibility of those individuals and domestic units that have the least human capital to pass on. In contrast, the social groups with the most diverse and greatest assets play an increasingly marginal role in this process, with the result that huge potential is not transmitted to future generations.

This line of reasoning, which as noted earlier is essentially macrosocial, also applies at the micro-social level. In the case of young people, the poor's greater fertility is reflected in a syndrome of early initiation in the triad of reproductive milestones (sexual activity, marriage and childbirth) and higher accrued birth rates (births up to a certain age). This clearly contrasts with the pattern among the socio-economically privileged. Young women from the upper social strata defer the main reproductive milestones, particularly those involving the greatest commitment (such as union and fertility) since these are the least compatible with the established procedures for the accumulation of assets: education, employment, acquisition of experience and so on. The reproductive behaviour of poor youths thus accentuates the inherent disadvantages of their condition, and is therefore a mechanism for the transmission of poverty and inequality between generations.

## B. FERTILITY AND EQUITY

### 1. Fertility rates (projections): main trends

From the early 1970s to the end of the twentieth century, the general fertility rate (GFR) declined in every country of the region, in some cases quite significantly. This downward trend, however, was less pronounced in some age groups than others. The figures in table IV.1 are eloquent in both respects. Throughout the region, the percentage change<sup>12</sup> in the GFR was negative, reflecting a downward trend over the period, with falls ranging from about 20% in the countries at a more advanced point in the demographic transition —and which therefore already had relatively low birth rates in 1970— to about 60% in those countries "in full demographic transition" (ECLAC, 1995b), and in Cuba.

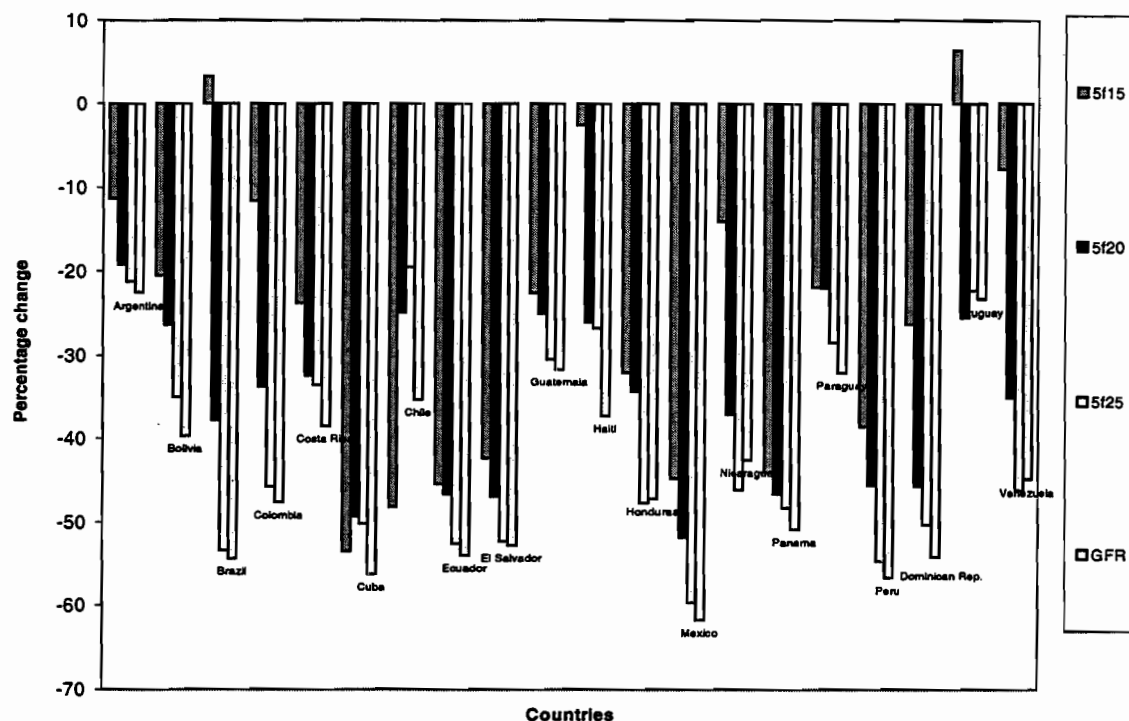
In line with this generalized decline in fertility the specific fertility rates of youths have also fallen, as can be seen in table IV.1. However, a review of the percentage reductions —and, more clearly, of the correlation between the decline in each specific rate and the GFR<sup>13</sup>— indicates that the specific fertility rates of young people have fallen less than the GFR. It should be noted in this regard that the sharpest fall in fertility has been among those aged over 29 (see table IV.1). Significantly, the variations in the specific rate of adolescent (under 20) fertility are particularly striking. In several countries the adolescent fertility rate has fallen much less than the other age-specific fertility rates and than the GFR. Notably, in Brazil and Uruguay —both of whose adolescent fertility rates are now below the regional average —the adolescent fertility rate increased in the period under consideration (see figure IV.1). It should also be noted that the fertility rates of the 20-24 and 25-29 age groups have also declined less than

<sup>12</sup> Calculated as  $[(\text{GFR}^{2000} - \text{GFR}^{1970})/\text{GFR}^{1970}] * 100$ .

<sup>13</sup> Calculated as  $(\% \text{ of reduction of } \text{f}_x / \% \text{ of reduction of GFR}) * 100$ .

the GFR (even if nowhere did they actually rise), and in most cases their decline was similar to that of the GFR. These differences can clearly be seen in the simple correlation between the percentage decline in the specific fertility rates, on the one hand, and the GFR on the other: in the case of adolescent fertility the index is 0.55, but in the other two cases it stands at over 0.9 (see table IV.1).

Figure IV.1  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIFIC RATES OF  
YOUTH FERTILITY AND THE GFR <sup>a</sup> BETWEEN 1970-1975 AND 2000-2005



Source: Table IV.1.

<sup>a</sup> General fertility rate.

Table IV.1

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: SPECIFIC JUVENILE FERTILITY RATE AND GLOBAL FERTILITY RATE  
(GFR), AND INDICATORS OF CHANGE BETWEEN 1970-1975 AND 2000-2005**

Countries	Reference periods, specific fertility rates (5/5, 5/0, 5/5) and global fertility rate (GFR)											
	1970-1975				1980-1985				1990-1995			
	$s_{15}^f$	$s_{20}^f$	$s_{25}^f$	GFR	$s_{15}^f$	$s_{20}^f$	$s_{25}^f$	GFR	$s_{15}^f$	$s_{20}^f$	$s_{25}^f$	GFR
Argentina	0.068	0.163	0.172	3.2	0.074	0.164	0.171	3.2	0.070	0.147	0.154	2.8
Bolivia	0.095	0.272	0.303	6.5	0.086	0.240	0.256	5.3	0.082	0.228	0.237	4.8
Brazil	0.068	0.212	0.240	4.7	0.067	0.187	0.193	3.6	0.082	0.147	0.127	2.5
Colombia	0.090	0.230	0.238	5.0	0.068	0.182	0.191	3.7	0.100	0.174	0.144	3.0
Costa Rica	0.106	0.223	0.200	4.3	0.098	0.194	0.175	3.5	0.089	0.166	0.148	3.0
Cuba	0.141	0.195	0.165	3.6	0.085	0.120	0.091	1.8	0.067	0.101	0.085	1.6
Chile	0.084	0.196	0.182	3.6	0.064	0.150	0.145	2.7	0.056	0.149	0.148	2.5
Ecuador	0.120	0.265	0.281	6.0	0.100	0.223	0.223	4.7	0.079	0.176	0.169	3.5
El Salvador	0.151	0.299	0.289	6.1	0.130	0.236	0.207	4.5	0.111	0.192	0.166	3.5
Guatemala	0.143	0.304	0.301	6.5	0.142	0.294	0.293	6.3	0.126	0.268	0.255	5.4
Haiti	0.066	0.203	0.265	5.8	0.090	0.212	0.290	6.2	0.076	0.179	0.233	4.8
Honduras	0.151	0.305	0.320	7.1	0.140	0.282	0.270	6.0	0.127	0.252	0.219	4.9
Mexico	0.116	0.293	0.320	6.5	0.095	0.219	0.215	4.2	0.077	0.171	0.161	3.1
Nicaragua	0.158	0.339	0.334	6.8	0.163	0.319	0.298	6.2	0.168	0.254	0.222	4.9
Panama	0.135	0.271	0.243	4.9	0.108	0.202	0.173	3.5	0.091	0.167	0.147	2.9
Paraguay	0.096	0.257	0.260	5.7	0.094	0.243	0.241	5.3	0.087	0.212	0.209	4.6
Peru	0.086	0.247	0.292	6.0	0.074	0.204	0.225	4.6	0.063	0.165	0.170	3.4
Dominican Rep.	0.117	0.282	0.282	5.6	0.097	0.212	0.208	3.9	0.091	0.180	0.161	3.1
Uruguay	0.065	0.165	0.163	3.0	0.063	0.140	0.140	2.6	0.071	0.123	0.134	2.5
Venezuela	0.103	0.240	0.244	4.9	0.101	0.206	0.194	4.0	0.101	0.181	0.162	3.3



Table IV.1 (concl.)

Countries	Reference periods, specific fertility rates (5'5, 5'0, 5'5) and global fertility rate (GFR)					
	% change between 1970-1975 and 2000-2005			Ratio between % change in $s'_{16}$ and GFR		
	$s'_{16}$	$s'_{20}$	$s'_{25}$	GFR	$s'_{16}$	$s'_{25}$
Argentina	-11.3	-19.2	-21.2	-22.5	50.0	93.9
Bolivia	-20.5	-26.3	-35.0	-39.7	51.6	88.1
Brazil	3.2	-37.8	-53.4	-54.4	-5.9	98.0
Colombia	-11.6	-33.7	-45.7	-47.6	24.3	96.1
Costa Rica	-23.7	-32.4	-33.5	-38.5	61.7	87.1
Cuba	-53.5	-49.3	-50.2	-56.3	95.0	89.1
Chile	-48.2	-24.8	-19.5	-35.3	136.6	55.2
Ecuador	-45.4	-46.6	-52.6	-54.0	84.1	97.4
El Salvador	-42.4	-46.9	-52.3	-52.8	80.4	99.0
Guatemala	-22.6	-24.9	-30.4	-31.6	71.4	96.0
Haiti	-2.6	-26.0	-26.7	-37.3	6.9	71.5
Honduras	-32.0	-34.3	-47.7	-47.2	67.8	101.0
Mexico	-44.8	-51.8	-59.7	-61.8	72.5	96.5
Nicaragua	-14.1	-37.1	-46.1	-42.6	33.0	108.3
Panama	-44.1	-46.6	-48.3	-50.9	86.5	94.8
Paraguay	-21.9	-22.0	-28.4	-32.0	68.4	88.8
Peru	-38.6	-45.6	-54.7	-56.7	-68.1	96.6
Dominican Rep.	-26.2	-45.7	-50.3	-54.2	48.4	92.8
Uruguay	6.4	-25.4	-22.3	-23.3	-27.5	95.7
Venezuela	-7.8	-35.0	-46.2	-44.9	17.4	102.7

Simple correlations between:	
$s'_{16}$ and GFR	0.525
$s'_{20}$ and GFR	0.926
$s'_{25}$ and GFR	0.945

Source: CELADE, calculations based on current population estimates and projections.



The decline in age-specific fertility rates does not imply a corresponding fall in the absolute number of births to teenage or young mothers. In fact, most countries recorded an increase in births among women in these age groups during this period. Only in Cuba did the absolute number of births to teenage and young mothers decline in all three of the five-year age groups considered here.

In conclusion, youth fertility has fallen considerably over the last 30 years but it has done so less than general fertility. This is especially true of teenage fertility, which has fallen the least of all.

The lesser relative decline in youth fertility accounts for one of the characteristic phenomena of the demographic transition: the concentration of fertility among those under 30—that is, among young people. This can be seen clearly from table IV.2, which shows the relative significance of each specific rate within general fertility, along with the aggregate weight of youth fertility (the sum of the specific rates of the three youngest age groups). The significance of aggregate youth fertility has risen in every case over the last 30 years: between 5% and 20% depending on the country. A comparison of the three youngest age groups highlights the marked increase in the relative significance of adolescent fertility. In the most prominent case (Brazil), adolescent fertility rose from 7% of general fertility in the early 1970s to 16% at the end of the twentieth century, an increase of 55% over the last three decades. Cuba, by contrast, is a case apart, since adolescent fertility accounts for a shrinking proportion of the country's general fertility.

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: INFLUENCE OF SPECIFIC JUVENILE FERTILITY RATES ON TOTAL FERTILITY AND CONCENTRATION OF FERTILITY IN THE JUVENILE AGE GROUP BETWEEN 1970-1975 AND 2000-2005**

Reference periods, influence of specific fertility rates (5f15, 5f20, 5f25) and concentration of fertility in young age-groups													
Countries	1970-1975				1980-1985				1990-1995				
	5f15	5f20	5f25	GFR	5f15	5f20	5f25	GFR	5f15	5f20	5f25	GFR	
Argentina	10.8	25.8	27.2	63.9	11.8	26	27.2	64.9	12.3	26	27.2	65.5	
Bolivia	7.3	20.9	23.3	51.5	8.1	22.6	24.1	54.8	8.6	23.7	24.7	57	
Brazil	7.2	22.5	25.4	55.1	9.2	25.7	26.6	61.5	16.4	29.3	25.4	71.1	
Colombia	9	23	23.8	55.9	9.3	24.6	25.9	59.8	16.5	28.8	23.9	69.2	
Costa Rica	12.2	25.6	23	60.8	14	27.7	25	66.7	14.8	27.6	24.7	67.2	
Cuba	19.8	27.4	23.2	70.5	23.2	32.8	24.8	80.8	21	31.6	26.6	79.2	
Chile	11.6	27	25	63.6	12	28.3	27.3	67.5	11	29.4	29.1	69.4	
Ecuador	10	22.1	23.4	55.5	10.6	23.7	23.8	58.1	11.3	24.9	24	60.2	
El Salvador	12.3	24.5	23.7	60.5	14.4	26.3	23	63.7	15.7	27.3	23.5	66.5	
Guatemala	11.1	23.6	23.3	58	11.4	23.5	23.4	58.2	11.7	24.8	23.6	60.1	
Haiti	5.7	17.6	23	46.3	7.2	17.1	23.3	47.7	7.9	18.7	24.3	50.9	
Honduras	10.7	21.6	22.7	55	11.7	23.5	22.5	57.6	12.9	25.6	22.3	60.8	
Mexico	8.9	22.5	24.5	55.9	11.2	25.8	25.4	62.4	12.3	27.5	25.8	65.5	
Nicaragua	11.6	25	24.6	61.2	13.2	25.7	24	63	17	25.7	22.5	65.3	
Panama	13.7	27.5	24.7	65.8	15.3	28.7	24.6	68.6	15.7	29	25.6	70.3	
Paraguay	8.5	22.7	23	54.1	8.9	23.1	23	55	9.5	23.3	22.9	55.8	
Peru	7.2	20.6	24.4	52.1	8.1	22.2	24.4	54.7	9.2	24.3	25	58.5	
Dominican Rep.	10.4	25.1	23.3	58.7	12.4	27.4	26.8	66.6	14.8	29.2	26.1	70	
Uruguay	10.9	27.5	27.1	65.5	12.2	27.1	27.3	66.6	14.2	24.8	26.8	65.8	
Venezuela	10.4	24.3	24.7	59.3	12.8	26	24.5	63.3	15.4	27.4	24.5	67.31	

Table IV.2 (concl.)

Countries	Reference peprids, influence of specific fertility rates( <i>sf</i> 15, <i>sf</i> 20, <i>sf</i> 25) and concentration of fertility in young age-groups									
	2000-2005				% change between 1970-1975 y 2000-2005					
	<i>sf</i> 15	<i>sf</i> 20	<i>sf</i> 25	GFR	<i>sf</i> 15	<i>sf</i> 20	<i>sf</i> 25	GFR		GFR
Argentina	12.4	26.9	27.7		67		4.1	1.7		4.7
Bolivia	9.6	25.6	25.1		60.3		18.1	7.3		14.6
Brasil	16.4	30.7	26		73.1		26.8	2.3		24.6
Colombia	15.2		24.7		69		21	3.4		19.1
Costa Rica	15.1	28.2	24.8		68.1		9	7.4		10.7
Cuba	21.1	31.8	26.5		79.5		13.9	12.4		11.3
Chile	9.3	31.4	31.1		71.8		13.9	19.6		11.4
Ecuador	11.9	25.6	24.1		61.6		13.9	3		10
El Salvador	15.1	27.6	23.9		66.6		11.2	1.1		9.1
Guatemala	12.6	25.9	23.7		62.2		9	1.8		6.8
Haiti	8.9	20.8	26.9		56.6		15.3	14.5		18.1
Honduras	13.8	26.9	22.5		63.2		19.7	-0.9		13
México	12.9	28.4	25.9		67.2		20.8	5.3		16.7
Nicaragua	17.4	27.3	23.1		67.8		8.6	-6.6		9.8
Panama	15.6	29.9	26		71.5		8.1	5.1		7.9
Paraguay	9.7	26.1	24.2		60		12.9	5		9.7
Peru	10.2	25.8	25.4		61.5		20.4	4.3		15.2
Dominican Rep.	16.7	29.7	25.3		71.6		15.6	7.8		18.1
Uruguay	15.1	26.8	27.5		69.3		-2.8	1.3		5.5
Venezuela	17.4	28.7	24.1		70.2		15.3	-2.3		15.4

Source: Calculations based on table IV.1.

Simple correlations between:	
<i>sf</i> 15 and GFR	0.525
<i>sf</i> 20 and GFR	0.926
<i>sf</i> 25 and GFR	0.945

## 2. How should youth fertility trends be assessed?

This question can be addressed from two perspectives. First, in interpretative terms, these trends are in no way surprising. They conform to a pattern that is typical of demographic transition processes. Generally speaking, fertility decline comes about through a reduction in the number of higher-order births, which are most likely to occur in the latter phases of a woman's reproductive life (aged 30 and above). The decline in fertility therefore tends to be concentrated among women in that age group. Two other considerations, however, should be noted. The first concerns adolescent fertility. Historical experience suggests that there is no single model for changes in the adolescent fertility rate during demographic transition (United Nations, 1998, pp. 47-52). However, and almost without exception in Latin America and the Caribbean, adolescent fertility is the least resistant to decline. This is the pattern seen in the United States, where adolescent fertility accounts for a significant proportion of general fertility, above all among disadvantaged socio-economic and ethnic groups. It is nevertheless in contrast with the pattern found in most Western European countries and Japan, where adolescent fertility is of almost marginal importance. Adolescent fertility thus requires special analysis, since such an examination casts light on the factors underlying its evolution in Latin America and the Caribbean. The second consideration concerns youths' potential deferral of fertility to a later phase of their reproductive lives. This trend is evident in a number of European countries and is now seen as one dimension of the so-called "second demographic transition".<sup>14</sup> Estimates and projections of fertility in Latin America and the Caribbean suggest, however, that the trend has still not reached the region. For a variety of reasons (including the shorter periods of education, cultural patterns of relatively early marriage and reproduction, limited female employment) Latin American and Caribbean women and couples have fewer children than in the past, but they still tend to have them while young.

Second, and from a policy perspective—which is closely linked to the consequences of such changes for individuals' lives and for society as a whole—these trends have both positive and negative implications. The absolute decline in specific fertility rates, especially those of teenagers, benefits individuals. These are most obvious in the case of women, who thus elude some of the social sanctions associated with early reproduction (especially when it is premarital) and avoid having to bear children at an early age. Similarly, the concentration of fertility among those in the 20-29 age group also seems to be a positive development, since by that age couples are better biologically and psychosocially prepared for pregnancy and for the sacrifices entailed in childcare. Most young people in the region reach the end of the preparatory phase of life—marked above all by leaving the educational system—by the age of 25, so it can be assumed that decisions on fertility taken towards the end of their youth (between 25 and 29) are taken in the context of fairly well-defined plans for the future. In short, the concentration of fertility between the ages of 20 and 29 can generally be viewed as a positive development. It should be noted however, that from the perspective of the training requirements of a modern society, the most efficient course might be to delay reproduction even further, leading to a gradual increase in the relative weight of fertility among the 30-34 age group. This trend is already apparent in some developed countries (United Nations, 1997b, p. 22 and 24). As argued above, the increase in the relative importance of adolescent fertility can hardly be welcomed, since it impedes the realization of a series of activities that are necessary for effective social performance in modern societies.

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<sup>14</sup> This comprises phenomena that are already well-established in developed western countries and are now beginning to appear in some Latin American and Caribbean countries, including: (a) fertility rates below the level of replacement; (b) an increase in the proportion of single people; (c) later marriage; (d) deferral of the first birth; (e) an increase in the number of consensual unions; (f) an increase in the proportion of births outside marriage; (g) an increase in the number of marital breakdowns, and (h) more varied family forms (Lesthaeghe, 1998, pp.5-6).

### 3. The evolution of youth fertility by socio-economic group

The preceding section was devoted to a general analysis of population estimates and projections. Such an approach has advantages (such as the availability of detailed information for all the countries of the region) and disadvantages (such as the fact that the available figures refer to rates rather than to more intuitively informative indicators, or the absence of a socio-economic breakdown of the figures). Hence this analysis will now give primacy to those questions that cannot be answered with estimates and projections. This approach also has its problems, the foremost being that comparable information is only available for the 8 to 12 countries of the region in which recent Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) have been conducted.

#### (a) Reproductive experience

For the purposes of this document, women with reproductive experience are those who already had a child or identified themselves as pregnant when interviewed for the survey. Simply as a result of life cycle effects, the proportion of women with reproductive experience can be expected to increase more or less systematically with age. This reflects the convergence of two age-dependent phenomena. On is broadly demographic: exposure to the risk of pregnancy or birth increases with age, a risk to which older women have been exposed for longer. The other is more social: the intensity of fertility varies according to age, whether as a result of social norms or biological factors. As noted earlier in the discussion of specific fertility rates, fertility is concentrated among women aged 20-29, a pattern that should be reflected in the proportion of women with reproductive experience.

The figures bear this out, since in all the countries considered here the proportion of women with reproductive experience rises with age. At the same time, the sharpest increases and decreases come at the age of 18 and again after 30, a pattern which is fully consistent with the low level of fertility among women in the region who are over 29 (see table IV.3).

Another finding worth highlighting —although it will come as little surprise to demographers— is that after a certain age the proportion of women with reproductive experience is very similar in the various countries. As can be seen in table IV.3, this convergence begins at the age of 29. In fact, the proportion of women aged 30 and over with reproductive experience ranges from a minimum of 90% in Brazil and Colombia to a maximum of 95% in Guatemala and Nicaragua. This virtual homogeneity is explained by the fact that the demographic transition basically comes about through a reduction in the number of higher-order births, while having only a minimal impact on first-order births. This is because women in a society in the final stages of demographic transition have fewer children than their counterparts at an early phase of the transition, but the vast majority still have at least one child over the course of their reproductive lives. It should therefore be emphasized that the minor differences between countries noted above are consistent with the progress of the demographic transition in each of them.

By contrast, the proportion of teenagers with reproductive experience varies much more significantly in the countries of the region (see table IV.3). Take, first, the priority group in terms of policies: girls under 18 who by definition are still of school age. The proportion of girls with reproductive experience ranges from 19% in Nicaragua to a minimum of 7% in Bolivia and Haiti. These figures prompt concern: in Nicaragua, the most alarming case, at least one out of every five girls faces pregnancy and child-rearing as early as 17 or under.

Table IV.3

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN BETWEEN 15 AND 49 YEARS OF AGE WITH  
REPRODUCTIVE EXPERIENCE, BY SOCIAL-ECONOMIC GROUP AND AGE GROUP; SELECTED  
COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**

País y grupo socioeconómico	Grupos de edad						País y grupo socioeconómico	Grupos de edad					
	15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 y más	Total		15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 y más	Total
<b>Bolivia, 1997</b>							<b>Paraguay, 1998</b>						
Rural	12.6	38.8	76.7	91.6	95.5	78	Rural	8.3	32.2	61.1	87.1	95.6	70.2
Urbana	5.4	21.1	50.5	80.6	94	64.4	Urbana	6.4	22	42.9	70.2	89	55.9
Quintil 1	18.7	46.2	80.5	93	96	80.6	Quintil 1	8.2	44.4	75.8	94.4	97.3	79
Quintil 5	2.2	10.3	28.5	67.2	91	55.6	Quintil 5	4.2	8.8	30	61.1	85.2	46.6
menos de 6 años de educación	19.2	48.9	78.8	94.7	96.3	85.9	menos de 6 años de educación	8.4	35.8	67.3	88	94.4	72.3
10 o más años de educación	1.8	7.5	32.7	67.3	89.6	59.3	10 o más años de educación	5	6.5	20.1	46.2	77.9	35.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>56.9</b>	<b>83.7</b>	<b>94.5</b>	<b>68.2</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>52.3</b>	<b>79.2</b>	<b>93.1</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Brasil, 1996</b>							<b>Nicaragua, 1998</b>						
Rural	15.6	41	60.1	85.8	92.6	72.7	Rural	23.5	53.5	79.3	91.3	96.1	76.6
Urbana	10.4	27.1	50.8	73.3	89.8	67.2	Urbana	15.5	35.4	64.7	82	94.6	70.4
Quintil 1	22	54.3	73.7	89	95	77.1	Quintil 1	27.9	61.5	87.2	94.2	97.8	81.3
Quintil 5	7	10.8	32.2	59.3	88.6	62.8	Quintil 5	7.9	25.7	49	70.3	93.2	64.5
menos de 6 años de educación	17.7	49.2	69.1	87.1	94.2	80.2	menos de 6 años de educación	31	67.5	84.6	92.3	96.9	84.2
10 o más años de educación	1.4	7.5	25	55.3	81.3	56.4	10 o más años de educación	3.7	12.2	40	67.4	90.3	59.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>75.3</b>	<b>90.3</b>	<b>68.2</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>41.8</b>	<b>69.9</b>	<b>90.3</b>	<b>95.1</b>	<b>72.6</b>
<b>Colombia, 1995</b>							<b>Perú, 1996</b>						
Rural	15.2	44.7	74.2	88.3	93.6	76.3	Rural	15	45.5	76.8	90.3	96.8	78
Urbana	7	27.5	54.1	76.4	88.7	66.2	Urbana	4.5	16.9	47.5	72.3	91.8	62.6
Quintil 1	18.5	53.8	80.5	91.9	94.8	79	Quintil 1	19.2	55.7	82	93.3	97.2	81.3
Quintil 5	2.5	9.6	37.2	63.5	82.2	58.4	Quintil 5	0.8	6.5	26.3	50.3	86.2	51.9
menos de 6 años de educación	16.4	53.9	80.1	91.2	93.9	82.5	menos de 6 años de educación	17.8	51.6	80.1	92.8	97.5	85.3
10 o más años de educación	3.2	12.1	34.6	63.7	81.4	55.6	10 o más años de educación	2.5	9.8	37.3	63.4	86.5	58.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>59.2</b>	<b>79.2</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>68.8</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>54.7</b>	<b>77.3</b>	<b>93.2</b>	<b>66.7</b>
<b>Guatemala, 1995</b>							<b>Rep. Dominicana, 1996</b>						
Rural	15.7	46.3	72.4	88.4	96.1	74.2	Rural	21.3	45.5	76.1	89.5	96.2	76.7
Urbana	8	27.4	61	83.7	93.9	67.6	Urbana	10.6	28.7	54.7	78.3	91.9	67.2
Quintil 1	21.5	53.5	84.4	94.4	97.2	81.5	Quintil 1	30.2	60.6	90.2	93.4	98.9	82.9
Quintil 5	5.8	22	43.7	73.7	93.9	62.1	Quintil 5	3.3	15.4	35.4	64.3	87.3	57.1
menos de 6 años de educación	18.5	51.9	79.3	91	96	79.8	menos de 6 años de educación	28.7	70.1	90.1	94.2	97	86.5
10 o más años de educación	2	8.8	30.6	70.9	91	56.6	10 o más años de educación	5.4	15.4	36.6	68.8	86.7	58.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>38.2</b>	<b>67.6</b>	<b>86.5</b>	<b>95.1</b>	<b>71.3</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>93.4</b>	<b>70.4</b>

Fuente: Procesamiento de las bases de datos de las Encuestas de Demografía (EDS) respectivas.

The figures are also somewhat surprising in some respects, notably the fact that the two countries with the lowest proportion of girls between 15 and 17 with reproductive experience are still in the initial phases of the demographic transition (ECLAC, 1995c). This could be explained by the relatively loose relation between adolescent fertility and general fertility. In both these cases, however, the "autonomy" of adolescent fertility operates differently to that described: in fact, given that both Bolivia and Haiti have high rates of fertility, their rates of adolescent fertility are peculiarly low. This finding coincides with the estimates and projections in table IV.1, which shows the low rates of adolescent fertility in both countries. In Brazil, by contrast, which is now in full demographic transition, 12% of girls between 15 and 17 have reproductive experience, so the country's overall decline in fertility has still not affected the rate in the earliest years of women's reproductive life. Significantly, table IV.1 shows that Brazil is one of the countries of the region with the highest absolute increase in the specific rate of adolescent fertility between 1970 and 2000. The results in table IV.3 also point to the complex link between the reproductive experience of young women aged 20-24 and the demographic transition, revealing certain national differences in the calendar of fertility that are not clearly reflected in its intensity. While a lower proportion of young Brazilian women in this age group have reproductive experience—as is wholly consistent with the progress of the country's demographic transition—Bolivia and Haiti also stand out for their very low figures. In these three countries, in fact, less than 57% of women aged between 20 and 24 have reproductive experience. At the other extreme are Guatemala and Nicaragua, where only 3 out of 20 women aged 20-24 lack reproductive experience. Colombia and the Dominican Republic, two countries immersed in a rapid process of demographic transition and with much lower general fertility rates than Haiti and Bolivia, have figures of about 60% (see table IV.3).

### *What is the significance of these findings?*

As already seen in empirical and conceptual terms, reproductive experience is not heavily dependent on the demographic transition. This is because it only takes account of births and pregnancies, and hence does not cover the dimension in which sustained fertility decline takes place: that of higher-order births. It is nevertheless interesting to note the case of Brazil, which suggests that as the transition progresses a growing number of women refrain from reproduction in their youth. This has great importance for policy-making, since it gives rise to the small proportion of women without immediate commitments to child-rearing, and who are thus better placed to enter the labour market, continue in education, or accumulate experiences through various means. The cases of Brazil and Nicaragua, moreover, highlight the significant differences between countries in this respect: in Brazil, 47% of women aged 20-24 do not have immediate child-rearing obligations, but this is true of just 30% of Nicaraguan women in the same age group (see table IV.3).

The differences are much greater within countries, as is evident from a comparison of the reproductive experience of different socio-economic quintiles over the course of their lives. All the countries under study display enormous variations in the proportion of women with reproductive experience in the lower age groups. In Bolivia, for example, the proportion of girls aged 15-17 with reproductive experience in the poorest quintile is 8.4 times higher than in the richest quintile. Although these differences are also apparent in the case of older age groups, they narrow considerably from 30 onwards. In every country and socio-economic group, therefore, fertility decline does not lead to a significant increase in the number of women reaching the end of their reproductive life without having given birth. Hence, although women in the upper strata have well below the average number of children, most of them have at least one child after the age of 29 (see table IV.3).

A detailed review of the data in table IV.3 reveals clear socio-economic variations in initiation. These, as will be argued below, can be viewed as inequalities. In the poorest quintile, the age group that should unquestionably be attending school (aged 15-17), there is a high proportion of girls with reproductive experience. The figures are particularly worrying in the cases of Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, where over 25% of girls aged 15-17 in the poorest quintile have reproductive experience. It is thus virtually impossible for them to attend school, and they have to face the heavy burden of pregnancy and childcare in very unfavourable biological, socio-economic and psychosocial conditions. By contrast, in all those countries for which information is available, the majority of women in the most privileged social strata defer the initiation of fertility until after the age of 24. This contrasts with the completely different situation among women in the poorest quintile: only a minority of those aged 20-24 (just 10% in the extreme case of the Dominican Republic) lack reproductive experience. Although the differences between the various socio-economic groups tend to narrow with age, they still signify very different paths in life. In the poorest quintile, motherhood is a virtually universal experience for women aged 24-29 (with figures of 90% and above). In the upper quintile, no less than 30% of women in that age range (50% in the case of Peru) have not had reproductive experience (see table IV.3). The data suggest, therefore, that the most socially disadvantaged women (rural women, poor women, those with less than six years of education) gain reproductive experience at a younger age—or, alternatively, that the most privileged socio-economic groups defer reproduction—thereby restricting even further their already limited opportunities to acquire assets and, hence, to achieve upward social mobility.<sup>15</sup>

In short, both within and between different countries, youth reproductive experience displays major variations that are significant both in terms of their degree and their policy implications. The differences are much greater among the younger age groups. A cross-country comparison reveals features of young women's reproductive experience that do not appear to be explained by the more general trends associated with the demographic transition, which suggests that the transition has still not affected first-order births. Within individual countries, the differences between socio-economic groups can be seen to be systematic and to discriminate against the most disadvantaged groups. A much higher proportion of rural women, of those in the poorest quintile of the population, and of the least educated face childbirth before the age of 20.

## **(b) Parity**

Another way of looking at reproductive life is by considering parity—that is, the number of live children a woman bears before a certain age. Table IV.4 and figure IV.2 show that parity is highly age-dependent, since the period of exposure to the risk of pregnancy and of childbearing increases as women get older.

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<sup>15</sup> This is not to suggest that adolescent fertility is responsible for the fact that girls remain poor. While maternity is certainly an obstacle to social mobility, for disadvantaged young women without opportunities or prospects, avoidance of motherhood during adolescence will not be enough to achieve upward social mobility. Equally, as a number of experts, including Latin Americans such as E. Pantelides (1995) and Stern and García (1999), have argued, in conditions of poverty, and above all during adolescence, the lack of plans for the future could mean that maternity is an important stimulus in life.



Table IV.4

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN BETWEEN 15 AND 49 YEARS OF AGE WITH REPRODUCTIVE EXPERIENCE SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP AND AGE GROUP, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998

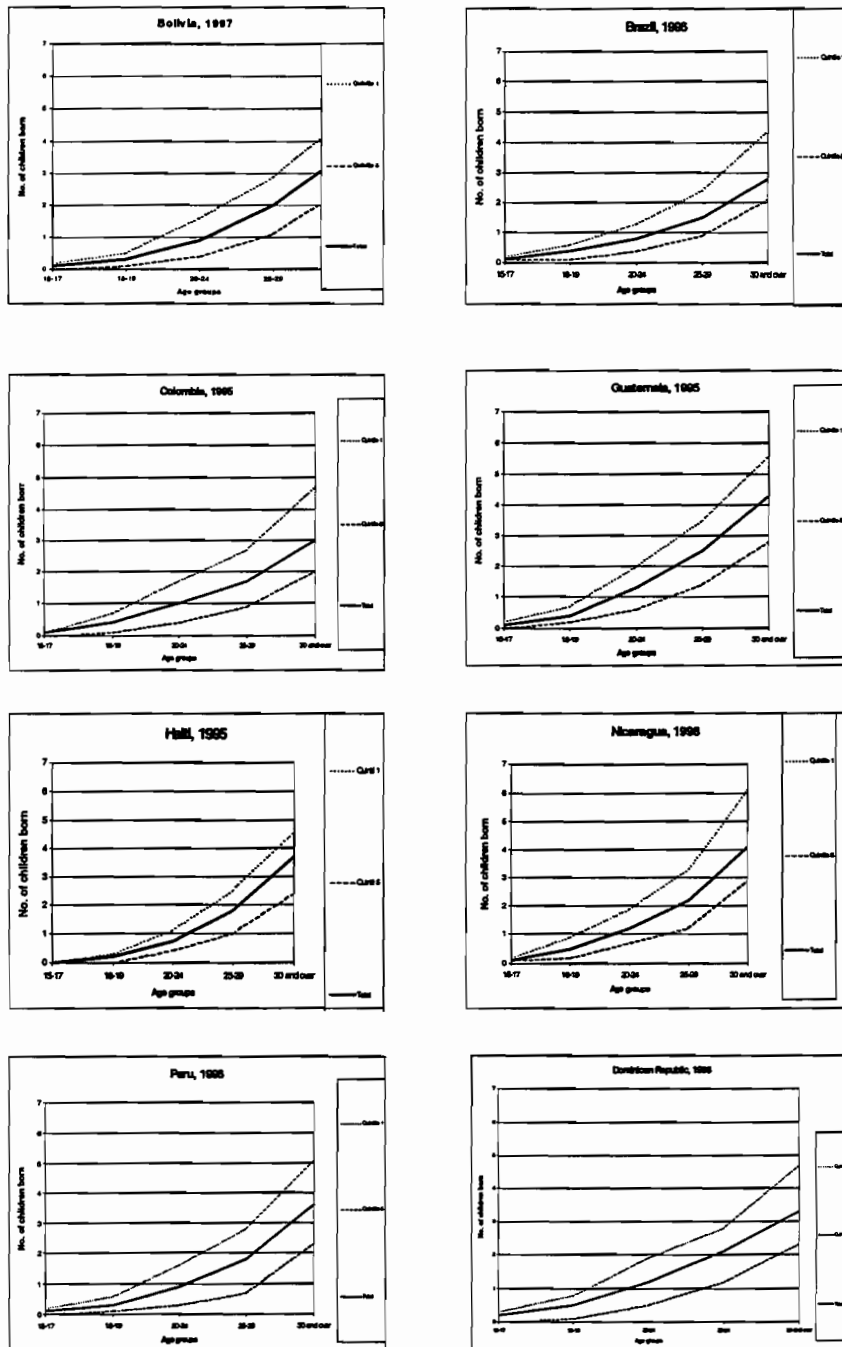
Country and socio-economic group		Age groups					Age groups					Total	
		15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 plus	15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 plus	30 plus	Total
<b>Bolivia, 1997</b>													
Rural		0.1	0.4	1.4	2.8	4.6	0.1	0.3	0.9	2.3	4.2	4.2	2.4
Urban		0.0	0.2	0.7	1.7	3.3	0.0	0.2	0.6	1.3	2.9	2.9	1.4
Differential		-	2.0	2.0	1.6	1.4	-	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.4	1.7
Quintile 1		0.2	0.5	1.6	2.9	4.8	0.0	0.3	1.1	2.5	4.6	4.6	2.9
Quintile 5		0.0	0.1	0.4	1.1	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.4	1.0	2.4	2.4	1.1
Differential		-	5.0	4.0	2.6	1.8	-	2.8	2.8	2.5	1.9	1.9	2.6
Less than 6 years education		0.1	0.6	1.5	2.7	4.4	0.1	0.3	1.0	2.3	3.9	3.9	2.4
10 or more years education		0.0	0.1	0.4	1.1	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.6	1.7	1.7	0.6
Differential		-	6.0	3.8	2.5	1.8	-	5.0	5.0	3.8	2.3	2.3	4.0
Total		0.1	0.3	0.9	2.0	3.7	0.0	0.2	0.7	1.8	3.7	3.7	2.0
<b>Brazil, 1998</b>													
Rural		0.2	0.4	1.0	2.0	3.8	0.2	0.7	1.5	2.9	5.2	5.2	2.9
Urban		0.1	0.3	0.7	1.4	2.6	0.1	0.4	1.0	1.9	3.6	3.6	2.1
Differential		-	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	-	1.8	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Quintile 1		0.2	0.6	1.3	2.4	4.4	0.2	0.9	1.9	3.3	6.1	6.1	3.5
Quintile 5		0.1	0.1	0.4	0.9	2.1	0.1	0.2	0.7	1.2	2.9	2.9	1.7
Differential		2.0	6.0	3.3	2.7	2.1	2.0	4.5	2.7	2.8	2.1	2.1	2.1
Less than 6 years education		0.2	0.6	1.1	2.1	3.4	0.3	0.9	1.8	3.1	5.2	5.2	3.5
10 or more years education		0.0	0.1	0.3	0.9	1.8	0.0	0.1	0.4	1.1	2.2	2.2	1.2
Differential		-	6.0	3.7	2.3	1.9	-	9.0	4.5	2.8	2.4	2.4	2.9
Total		0.1	0.4	0.8	1.5	2.8	0.1	0.5	1.2	2.2	4.1	4.1	2.4
<b>Colombia, 1995</b>													
Rural		0.1	0.5	1.3	2.3	4.0	0.1	0.5	1.4	2.5	4.7	4.7	2.9
Urban		0.1	0.3	0.7	1.4	2.6	0.0	0.2	0.6	1.4	3.1	3.1	1.7
Differential		-	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.5	-	2.5	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.5	1.7
Quintile 1		0.1	0.7	1.7	2.7	4.7	0.2	0.6	1.6	2.8	5.1	5.1	3.2
Quintile 5		0.0	0.1	0.4	0.9	2.0	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.7	2.3	2.3	1.2
Differential		-	7.0	4.3	3.0	2.4	-	6.0	5.3	4.0	2.2	2.2	2.7
Less than 6 years education		0.1	0.6	1.5	2.3	3.7	0.1	0.8	1.5	2.7	4.6	4.6	3.3
10 or more years education		0.0	0.1	0.3	0.9	1.8	0.0	0.1	0.4	1.0	2.2	2.2	1.2
Differential		-	6.0	5.0	2.6	2.1	-	6.0	3.8	2.7	2.1	2.1	2.8
Total		0.1	0.4	1.0	1.7	3.0	0.1	0.3	0.9	1.8	3.6	3.6	1.2
<b>Guatemala, 1995</b>													
Rural		0.1	0.5	1.5	2.8	5.0	0.2	0.5	1.5	2.5	4.0	4.0	2.5
Urban		0.1	0.3	1.0	2.1	3.5	0.1	0.3	0.9	1.7	2.9	2.9	1.7
Differential		-	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.4	-	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.5
Quintile 1		0.2	0.7	2.0	3.5	5.6	0.3	0.8	1.9	2.8	4.7	4.7	2.9
Quintile 5		0.0	0.2	0.6	1.4	2.8	0.0	0.1	0.5	1.2	2.3	2.3	1.3
Differential		-	3.5	3.3	2.5	2.0	-	8.0	3.8	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.2
Less than 6 years education		0.1	0.6	1.8	3.0	5.0	0.2	0.9	1.9	2.8	4.1	4.1	3.1
10 or more years education		0.0	0.1	0.4	1.3	2.4	0.0	0.1	0.5	1.3	2.1	2.1	1.2
Differential		-	6.0	4.0	2.3	2.1	-	9.0	3.8	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.6
Total		0.1	0.4	1.3	2.5	4.3	0.2	0.5	1.2	2.1	3.3	3.3	2.0

Source: Calculated from the respective Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.

Again, there are significant variations between countries. As with reproductive experience, the figures suggest that there is little correlation between the parity rate during adolescence (and even among the 20-24 age group) and the phase of the demographic transition reached by the countries of the region. These results reinforce the impression that certain national contexts either promote or discourage early reproduction. Guatemala, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Colombia (the latter two in full demographic transition) appear to belong to the first category since women aged 20-24 have more than one child on average. By contrast, Bolivia, Haiti and Peru belong to the group of countries that discourage early parity, despite the fact that they are still at an early phase of the demographic transition. The demographic transition does nevertheless have a strong impact on the levels of parity in the final stages of youth and during adulthood, since the average number of children born to Brazilian women between 25 and 29 is by far the lowest of the eight countries analyzed here. Hence, in contrast to the indicator of reproductive experience, which became increasingly homogenous with age, parity rates in the final stages of youth display significant variations and tend to stem from the stage the society has reached in its demographic transition.

Finally, the figures for parity clearly confirm that reproductive paths are shaped from the outset by socio-economic segmentation, and that these variations continue throughout women's lives (see figure IV.2). Poor women tend to have higher levels of parity from the beginning of adolescence, and significantly higher accrued parity over the course of their adult lives, than women in the upper quintile. In short, and as highlighted here in the conceptual framework, early reproduction itself has effects that hinder the social integration of younger mothers. Its systematic implications, moreover, affect the course of women's entire reproductive lives. This is clearly evident in the case of poor women, who have their first child younger and who have borne more children by the end of their youth.

Figure IV.2  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: ACCRUED PARITY OF WOMEN AGED 15-49,  
 BY AGE GROUPS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUINTILES, SELECTED COUNTRIES,  
 1995-1999**



Source: Table IV.4.

#### 4. Reproductive preferences and reproductive realities of different social groups

As has been noted elsewhere (ECLAC, 1998c), reproductive preferences tend to be more homogenous—both between and within different countries—than reproductive behaviour. The data in table IV.5 conform to this empirical pattern, while raising a number of other questions for analysis.

First, one prominent feature is that there is no automatic, causal link between the demographic transition and women's stated reproductive preferences. This is obvious in the total values for the average number of children desired by women. The values for Bolivia and Nicaragua, for example, are lower than or similar to those for Brazil, and are significantly lower than those for the Dominican Republic. This also holds true for young people, as illustrated by the fact that young Bolivian, Nicaraguan and Peruvian women want fewer children than their counterparts in Brazil and the Dominican Republic (see table IV.5).

Second, while the levels of desired fertility in the different countries are more uniform than those of recorded fertility, this homogeneity is more marked among young women. Clearly, the region's younger generations have been exposed to more or less the same messages, changes and events, which have given rise to certain shared attitudes and world views, probably including those relating to desired family size.

Third, young women persistently display a preference for smaller families than their adult counterparts, reflecting generational differences that should lead to different reproductive conduct. Hence the subjective profile of younger women appears to favour the continued progress of the demographic transition. There are, admittedly, exceptional cases such as Brazil, where poor adolescent girls express a desire to have more children than their sisters aged 25-29. However, this distinctive feature of poor Brazilian teenagers is probably explained by the presence, despite the advanced phase of the country's demographic transition, of large number of girls with reproductive experience.

Fourth, the socio-economic divergence of reproductive aspirations among youths does not strictly follow the same line as reproductive experience and parity. Although in most countries of the region the socio-economically disadvantaged sectors (the poor, rural dwellers, and the less educated) express the highest reproductive preferences, in most cases there are only minimal differences between the aspirations of the socio-economic extremes. In Bolivia, in fact, poor young women express the desire to have fewer children than their counterparts in the wealthiest quintile.

As important as these findings on young people's reproductive preferences is the relation between their aspirations and their actual reproductive behaviour. The data in tables IV.4 and IV.5 and figure IV.3 bear out the conclusions drawn above and provide new information, especially on youth. In most countries, accrued fertility among the large number of women aged 30 and above surpasses the reproductive aspirations of the socio-economically disadvantaged groups (as illustrated in figure IV.3 by the group of women with less than six years of education), but it tends to be lower than those preferences in the upper socio-economic sectors. These data point to a polarization whose two extremes reveal a potential infringement of basic reproductive rights: the poor have more children than they want, and women from the upper socio-economic sector have fewer than they want. This is not to suggest that these two situations are equivalent. It seems more logical to conclude, for both substantive and more formal reasons, that excess fertility is more of a hardship than unsatisfied desires. The accrued fertility deficit among the wealthier groups can still be resolved naturally by births between the ages of 30 and 49, while poor women in the same age group have no way of remedying their excess fertility.

Table IV.5

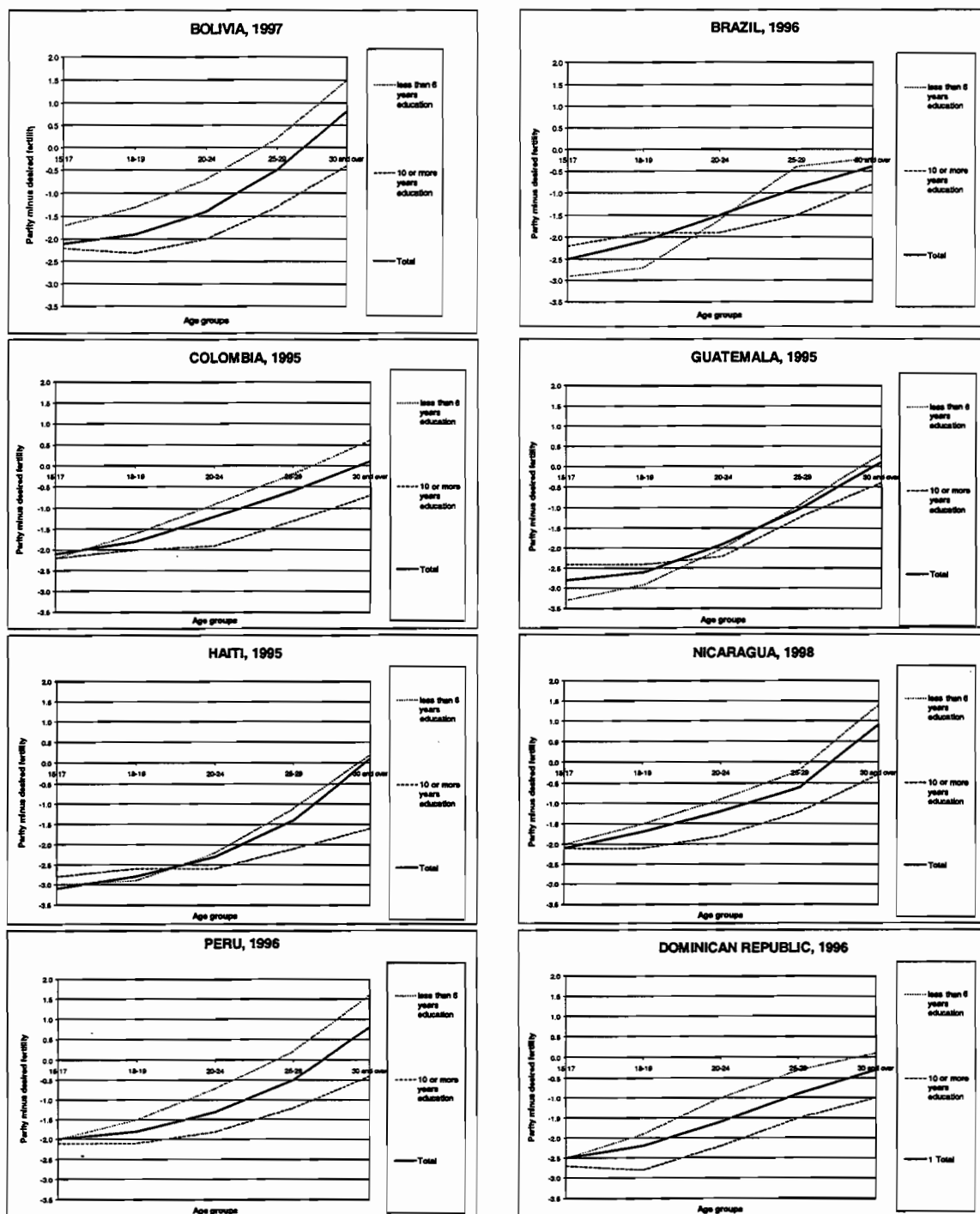
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN DESIRED BY WOMEN  
AGED 15-49, BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND AGE GROUP, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**

Country and socio-economic group							Age groups							Country and socio-economic group							Age group						
Bolivia, 1997							15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 plus	Total	Haiti, 1995							15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 plus	Total		
Rural							2.0	2.0	2.2	2.6	2.9	2.5	Rural							3.3	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.8	3.6		
Urban							2.2	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.9	2.6	Urban							2.9	2.7	2.7	2.8	3.3	3.0		
Differential							0.9	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	Differential							1.1	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2		
Quintile 1							1.7	2.0	2.2	2.6	2.9	2.6	Quintile 1							3.9	3.7	3.5	3.8	4.1	3.9		
Quintile 5							2.3	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.9	2.6	Quintile 5							2.9	2.6	2.7	2.8	3.1	2.9		
Differential							0.7	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	Differential							1.3	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.3		
Less than 6 years education							1.8	1.9	2.2	2.5	2.9	2.6	Less than 6 years education							3.1	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.7	3.4		
10 or more years education							2.2	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.8	2.5	10 or more years education							2.8	2.6	2.8	2.7	3.3	2.9		
Differential							0.8	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	Differential							1.1	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.2		
Total							2.2	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.9	2.6	Total							3.1	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.6	3.3		
Brazil, 1996							15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 plus	Total	Nicaragua, 1998							15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 plus	Total		
Rural							4.1	3.2	3.2	2.8	4.2	3.8	Rural							2.4	2.4	2.7	3.3	4.0	3.3		
Urban							2.3	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.9	2.6	Urban							2.0	2.1	2.2	2.5	2.9	2.5		
Differential							1.8	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.5	Differential							1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.3		
Quintile 1							4.0	3.3	3.7	3.0	4.8	4.1	Quintile 1							2.5	2.5	2.9	3.7	4.6	3.6		
Quintile 5							2.2	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.7	2.4	Quintile 5							2.2	2.2	2.1	2.4	2.7	2.4		
Differential							1.8	1.9	2.2	2.5	2.9	2.6	Differential							1.1	1.1	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.5		
Less than 6 years education							3.1	3.3	2.7	2.5	3.6	3.3	Less than 6 years education							2.3	2.4	2.7	3.3	3.8	3.3		
10 or more years education							2.2	2.0	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.4	10 or more years education							2.1	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.3		
Differential							1.4	1.7	1.2	1.0	1.4	1.4	Differential							1.1	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.4		
Total							2.6	2.5	2.3	2.4	3.2	2.8	Total							2.2	2.2	2.4	2.8	3.2	2.8		
Colombia, 1995							15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 plus	Total	Peru, 1996							15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 plus	Total		
Rural							2.3	2.3	2.5	2.6	3.3	2.9	Rural							2.1	2.2	2.3	2.6	3.2	2.7		
Urban							2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.7	2.4	Urban							2.1	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.7	2.4		
Differential							1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2	Differential							1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.1		
Quintile 1							2.4	2.3	2.6	2.8	3.7	3.1	Quintile 1							2.2	2.2	2.3	2.7	3.3	2.8		
Quintile 5							2.1	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.6	2.4	Quintile 5							2.1	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.6	2.4		
Differential							1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.3	Differential							1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.2		
Less than 6 years education							2.3	2.2	2.4	2.5	3.1	2.8	Less than 6 years education							2.1	2.1	2.2	2.5	3.0	2.7		
10 or more years education							2.2	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.5	2.3	10 or more years education							2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.6	2.3		
Differential							1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	Differential							1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2		
Total							2.2	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.9	2.5	Total							2.1	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.8	2.5		
Guatemala, 1995							15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 plus	Total	Dominican Rep. 1986							15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 plus	Total		
Rural							3.2	3.4	3.5	3.8	4.8	4.1	Rural							2.8	2.7	2.9	3.2	4.0	3.4		
Urban							2.6	2.6	2.8	3.1	3.5	3.1	Urban							2.6	2.8	2.7	2.9	3.4	3.0		
Differential							1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.3	Differential							1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.1		
Quintile 1							3.8	3.8	3.9	4.4	5.3	4.6	Quintile 1							2.7	2.7	3.0	3.4	4.2	3.5		
Quintile 5							2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	3.1	2.8	Quintile 5							2.6	2.9	2.8	2.6	3.2	2.9		
Differential							1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.6	Differential							1.0	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.2		
Less than 6 years education							3.4	3.5	3.6	3.9	4.7	4.2	Less than 6 years education							2.7	2.8	2.9	3.1	4.0	3.5		
10 or more years education							2.4	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.8	2.6	10 or more years education							2.7	2.9	2.7	2.8	3.1	2.9		
Differential							1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.7	1.6	Differential							1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.2		
Total							2.9	3.0	3.2	3.5	4.2	3.6	Total							2.7	2.7	2.8	3.0	3.6	3.2		

Source: Calculated from respective Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) databases.

Figure IV.3

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACCRUED PARITY AND IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN CLAIMED BY WOMEN AGED 15-49, BY AGE GROUP AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**



Source: Calculated from the respective Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.

### *What is happening among the young?*

Given that they are still in the midst of their reproductive lives, most young people — regardless of their socio-economic position— have not achieved their reproductive goals. Indeed, Bolivia and Peru are the only two countries where poor young women between 25 and 29 record excess fertility, which is suggestive of unwanted births. Elsewhere in the region, women from disadvantaged social groups do not realize their reproductive aspirations during their youth and, on average, the accrued parity of women in the 25-29 age group is lower than their desired number of children (see figure IV.3).

In short, while young women's reproductive preferences also vary in accordance with their socio-economic position, these variations are much less significant than the differences in their actual behaviour. In contrast to the case of older women, whose figures for desired and observed fertility provide clear evidence of unwanted births, a comparison of this type reveals less in the case of young women. This is because young women are in the early and peak phases of their reproductive lives, and have thus only rarely achieved their reproductive preferences. Similarly, the fact that observed fertility among young women is lower than their desired fertility does not mean that all their fertility has been desired. The level of wanted and unwanted youth fertility can only be estimated from other indicators, such as statements as to whether the last child born was wanted. Even then, the age of young women will probably still affect these values, because the younger they are, the more likely it is that their last-born child will be a low-order birth and the proportion of "unwanted births" is usually lower than among higher-order births. Finally, while young women's statements on their reproductive preferences reveal the existence of subjective ideas conducive to progress in the demographic transition, they also show that such progress has limits, since the number of children desired by girls is still higher than the level of replacement.

## **C. THE SEXUAL INITIATION, NUPTIAL AND REPRODUCTIVE TRIAD**

The analysis and findings presented in this chapter have hereto focused on reproductive experience —that is, on the final phases of reproductive behaviour and on live births in particular. However, the conceptual framework outlined above highlights the importance of adopting a broader notion of reproductive behaviour, one that should incorporate the long chain of events that leads to a birth, and especially those relating to sexuality and the formation of a stable union (or nuptiality).

It is possible to see reproductive behaviour as structured by a triad of events or milestones, namely sexual, nuptial, and reproductive initiation. In accordance with the reasoning of the conceptual framework, the timing of this triad is determined by a complex web of factors, one of which is the phase of the demographic transition reached by the country concerned. In pre-transitional contexts, or when the country is at a very early stage of its transition, these three events usually take place at a very young age and almost simultaneously. Girls form a union while still very young, begin to have sexual relations, and very quickly have their first child. At more advanced phases of the transition, or when this has been completed, there is a clear tendency for both the formation of unions and reproduction to be postponed, although the same is not always true of sexual initiation (United Nations, 1998).

This latter issue is a matter of some controversy. Some argue that economic and socio-cultural development, coupled to demographic transition (they are usually closely linked) serve to delay the formation of unions. This is explained by the emergence of alternative, non-traditional lifestyles and by the greater requirements for effective social participation. Such participation is usually incompatible with the acquisition of commitments at a very early age, and above all with the formation of a union and child-

rearing. Hence the deferral of sexual initiation. Others maintain that economic and socio-cultural development unleashes forces —such as greater sexual permissiveness and exposure to sexual messages and stimuli— that tend to bring sexual initiation forward, albeit in a context unconnected to marriage (United Nations, 1997). While the figures for Latin America and the Caribbean tend to bear out the first hypothesis (United Nations, 1998, *ibid.* p. 26), the second enjoys wider currency among opinion formers and decision makers. The evidence is inconclusive. Moreover, it is possible that over and above the age of sexual initiation, socio-economic development and demographic transition do transform the context in which initiation takes place. In traditional societies, sexual initiation is much more closely related to marriage than in modern societies, where it is often premarital.

There are conceptual and empirical grounds for believing that socio-economic conditions also influence this triad and that the triad, in turn, has socio-economic ramifications. More specifically, the pattern among the poor appears to reflect a combination of sociocultural patterns of early nuptial/sexual/reproductive initiation and the relative absence of non-traditional plans for life. For women, this means devoting themselves to child-rearing and domestic work; for men, it entails early entry into the labour market. It therefore appears that a number of different factors converge to promote this pattern of early initiation among the socially disadvantaged. By contrast, the upper socio-economic strata display clear signs of a contradictory trend of early sexual initiation and a modern lifestyle that at least encourages the deferral of marriage and reproduction.

A preliminary quantitative analysis of this triad can be effected by calculating the average (or rather mean) age at which it takes place. The available data are shown in table IV.6. These figures should be treated with caution: they do not reflect the dispersion of the series; the age group referred to comprises both young women and adults; and (a methodological flaw), they do not take account of those women who have not undergone the triad. Despite these reservations, the following conclusions can be drawn from the data:

(i) in general, over half the women in the region have their first sexual experience before the age of 20. That is, they become sexually active in adolescence. This trend poses a number of challenges. These include the need to ensure that these girls' sexual activity does not result in unwanted pregnancy, that they are able to make mature, responsible and informed decisions about reproduction, and that they have access to health services unhindered by the social prohibitions that prevent recognition of teenagers of both sexes as sexually active individuals;

(ii) nowhere in Latin America and the Caribbean is the gap between sexual initiation and the first union longer than three years, and in countries such as Nicaragua the two events take place almost simultaneously. It can be inferred from this that there is a certain period when sexual activity is premarital;

(iii) in contrast to what was suggested in the conceptual framework, the timing of the triad of initiation is only weakly dependent on the phase of a country's phase of demographic transition. This can be seen most clearly in the contrasting cases of Haiti (where the triad is late in the context of an incipient demographic transition), and Jamaica and the Dominican Republic (where an early triad coexists with an advanced process of demographic transition). The case of Jamaica is striking: 80% of women are sexually active by the age of 20.



Table IV.6

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SELECTED COUNTRIES: AVERAGE AGE AT SEXUAL INITIATION, FORMATION OF FIRST UNION AND BIRTH OF FIRST CHILD, WOMEN AGED 20-49, 1995-1998**

Country	Year	First sexual relation	First union
Bolivia	1998	18.9	20.9
Brazil	1996	19.5	21.1
Colombia	1995	19.6	21.4
Ecuador	1994	19.8	-
El Salvador	1993	18.5	-
Guatemala	1995	18.2	19
Haiti	1995	19.0	20.8
Honduras	1996	18.3	-
Jamaica	1997	17.3	-
Nicaragua	1998	18.2	18.3
Peru	1996	18.9	20.9
Dominican Rep.	1996	18.7	19.3
Venezuela	1998	18.1	-

Source: Guzmán, R. Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) support team, Office for Latin America and Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

A simpler and intrinsically stricter calculation can be used to identify the proportion of women in a given cohort who began their sexual, nuptial and reproductive lives during adolescence, and within certain age ranges of adolescence.<sup>16</sup> This makes it possible to compare the reproductive trajectories of women from different countries, as well as from different socio-economic groups and cohorts within them. Cohort analysis provides information on the changing pattern of sexual/nuptial/reproductive initiation over time, a question on which opinion is divided.

Using this proportion as an indicator it can be said that most young women in the region become sexually active before the age of 20 while a minority, the size of which varies by country, first begin sexual relations by the age of 15. If the analysis is limited to women aged between 20 and 24 at the time of the interview (see table IV.7), the extreme values for sexual initiation correspond to Nicaragua (where 14% of girls first had sexual relations before the age of 15, and 65% by the age of 20), and Bolivia (where only 6% of girls had sexual relations before the age of 15, and 53% before they reached of 20). Similarly, Bolivia, Peru and Haiti are notable for the late formation of the first union: less than 5% of women aged 20 to 24 formed unions before they were 15, and less than 25% before the age of 18. In contrast, 16% of Nicaraguan women formed unions before they reached 15, and 50% before the age of 18. Early or late sexual and nuptial initiation has a decisive influence on the age at which fertility begins. Bolivia, Peru and Haiti therefore have the lowest proportions of premature (under 15), early (under 18) and adolescent (under 20) mothers. Nicaragua is at the other extreme: more than 50% of Nicaraguan women were mothers before they reached 20 (see table IV.7).

<sup>16</sup> For the purposes of this document, these age groups are defined as follows: (i) under 15 (premature); (ii) under 18 (early) and (iii) under 20 (teenage).

Between the two extremes of countries where the triad occurs exceptionally late or early (at least in the Latin American and Caribbean context), Brazil is worth noting for its quantitative importance and for its empirical peculiarities. Of all the countries analyzed here, Brazil is at the most advanced phase of the demographic transition. Brazil's transition does not seem to be having a clear delaying impact on sexual initiation. In fact, of the eight countries under study, Brazil ranks third after Nicaragua and Guatemala in terms of the proportion of women who are sexually active before they reach the age of 18 (see table IV.7). At the same time, however, the transition does seem to influence the formation of unions and the initiation of reproduction, since Brazil ranks third after Bolivia and Peru among those countries with the lowest proportion of women under 18 in unions or with children. As regards reproduction itself, Brazil has the lowest proportion of mothers under 20. The Brazilian and Haitian cases are also interesting because young women in the upper quintile experience a significantly later triad than those in the poorest quintile, but they become sexually active before their counterparts from the upper quintile in other countries (see figure IV.4).

Table IV.7

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SELECTED COUNTRIES: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN  
AGED 20-24 WHO HAD THEIR FIRST SEXUAL EXPERIENCE  
BY THE AGE OF 15, 18 AND 20, 1993-1998**

Country		Percentage who had their first sexual experience by the age of			Percentage who formed their first union by the age of			Percentage who had their first child by the age of		
		15	18	20	15	18	20	15	18	20
DHS surveys	Year									
Bolivia	1998	5.8	32.6	53.3	2.6	21.2	38.4	1.3	16.0	36.1
Brazil	1996	9.7	42.4	61.0	4.4	23.7	38.8	1.8	16.1	32.0
Colombia	1995	8.9	40.6	61.5	5.7	25.7	41.6	2.5	17.7	36.0
Guatemala	1995	13.7	43.7	60.6	10.4	38.5	56.1	4.0	26.3	46.7
Haiti	1995	9.2	40.9	61.9	4.9	23.9	44.9	1.9	15.1	31.5
Nicaragua	1998	14.2	49.0	64.9	16.0	50.2	65.5	3.9	31.2	52.4
Peru	1996	6.9	33.8	53.0	3.9	21.3	37.6	1.4	14.3	32.1
Dominican Rep.	1996	12.5	42.1	59.3	10.8	37.5	53.3	2.8	21.7	39.3
DHS surveys <sup>b</sup>	Year	Percentage who had their first sexual experience by the age of <sup>a</sup>								
		15			18			20		
Ecuador	1994	8.0			34.0			53.1		
El Salvador	1993	13.7			48.3			66.5		
Honduras	1996	11.3			46.8			66.4		
Jamaica	1997	12.8			62.6			83.9		
Venezuela	1998	8.8			35.6			53.0		

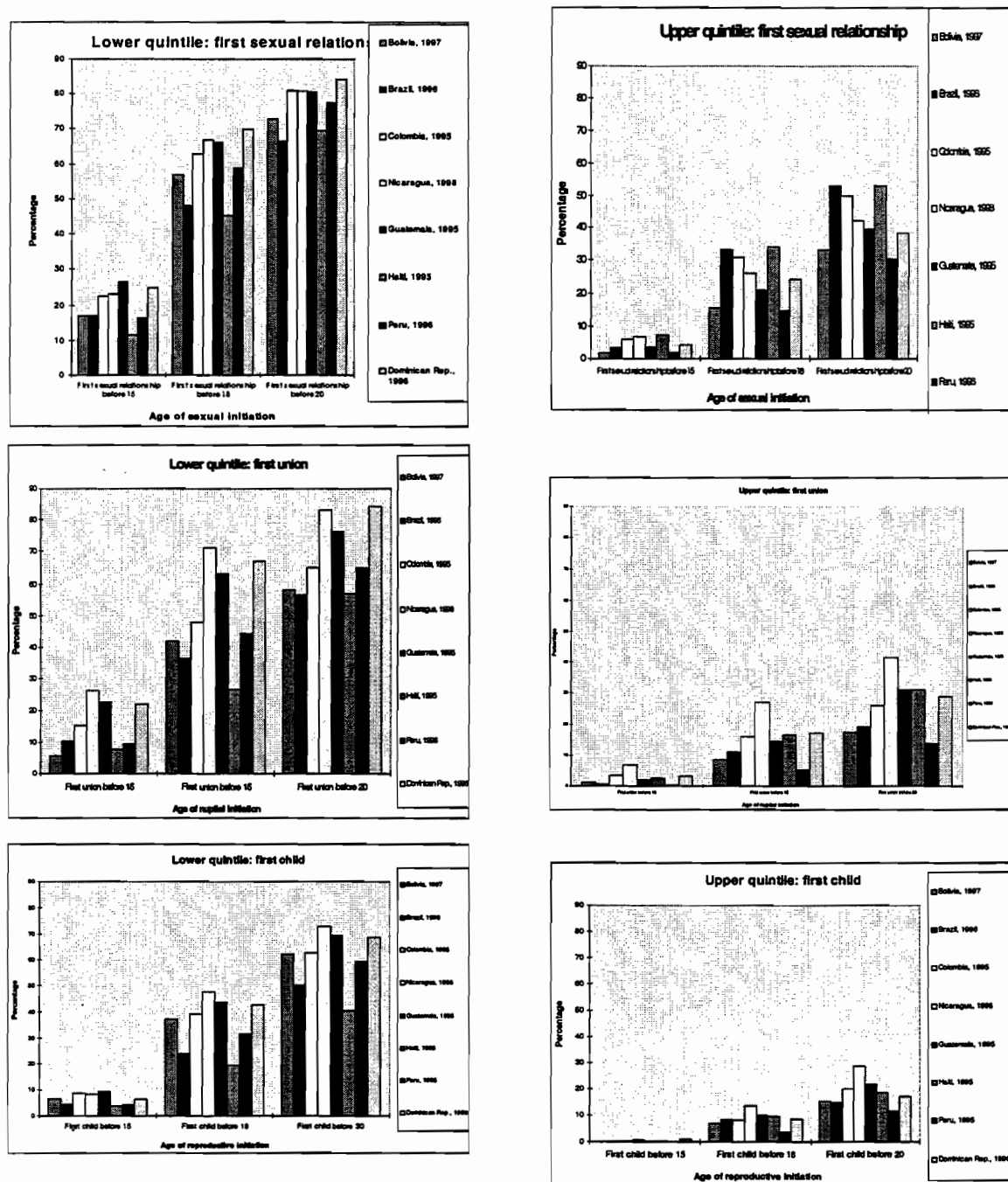
**Source:** Calculated on the basis of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) database, and J. Guzmán, R. Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

<sup>a</sup> Calculated for women aged 20 to 49.

<sup>b</sup> Centres for Disease Control.

Figure IV.4

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 20-24 WHO HAD THEIR FIRST SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP, FIRST UNION AND FIRST CHILD BEFORE THE AGE OF 15, OF 18 AND OF 20, BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUINTILE, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**



Source: Calculated on the basis of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) database.

These figures are fully compatible with the findings for adolescent fertility. They also provide an insight into the reasons for the low adolescent fertility found in some countries, such as Bolivia, that are still in the early phases of the demographic transition. The explanation for this trend would appear to lie—rather than in norms, restrictions or attitudes towards the regulation of girls' fertility—in sociocultural factors that encourage the deferral of sexual/nuptial initiation. Given that these factors could be rooted in traditional ways of life, such as community institutions that strongly condemn extramarital sex and reject the idea of young people under 20 leaving home (thereby promoting later marriage), the economic and cultural modernization of these countries could foster divergent trends in youth reproduction. In other words, while modernization encourages a decline in total fertility it could lead to an increase, or much smaller decrease, in adolescent fertility.

In short, and despite the evidence drawn from other indicators that patterns of adolescent fertility are no less independent of the phase and progress of the demographic transition, an examination of the triad comprising sexual/nuptial/reproductive initiation reveals a wide variety of circumstances among the countries of the region. Again, these seem to be fairly independent of the phase of the demographic transition, and even of the level of socio-economic development. First, there is the group of countries—Bolivia, Haiti and Peru—with a late reproductive triad. Given that this is clearly not because they are at an advanced phase of the demographic transition or have a high level of social and economic development, the later triad of initiation must be a product of cultural patterns favouring the relatively late start of reproductive activity. Another group of countries—including most of those in Central America and the Caribbean, but with the exception of Haiti—has an early triad, in the context of a still incipient demographic transition and low levels of socio-economic development. For its part, Brazil exemplifies the complexity of any causal explanation for these phenomena, since sexual initiation in Brazil takes place much earlier than in several other countries that are at a much earlier phase of the demographic transition. Nonetheless, in terms of the age of the woman at the time of her first birth, Brazil is one of the countries with the oldest average age and, in fact, has the lowest proportion of mothers under 20 of all the countries considered here.

The heterogeneity of the triad is much greater, more systematic, and easier to interpret in conceptual terms when the patterns within countries are considered. Figure IV.4 shows the figures for women—aged 20 to 24 at the time of the survey, meaning that the figures offer a revealing picture of the trend among young people—from the upper and lower socio-economic quintiles. In every country, women in the lower quintile began their sexual, nuptial and reproductive lives at a younger age than women in the upper quintile. These figures raise important questions and arouse concern, both because of the scale of the absolute values and of the very different conduct between the two groups.

In terms of the absolute values, in three of the eight countries under study some 10% of women in the poorest quintile were mothers by the age of 15, and 20% began their nuptial and sexual lives before that age. This is a particularly vulnerable group, not least because of the health risks associated with pregnancy. In terms of their social integration, it can be assumed that the formation of a union and the onset of fertility before the age of 15 seriously undermine any chance of following anything other than a traditional life path. The numbers are even more alarming in the case of those who embark on the triad before the age of 18. In six of the eight countries under study (and with the persistent and paradoxical exception of Haiti, and the less surprising one of Brazil, which both record lower figures) over 30% of women had their first child by the time they were 18, and over 40% had formed a union before that age. Again, it should be noted that these poor, young women constitute a particularly vulnerable group, since they have assumed major responsibilities such as childcare and commitment to a partner while still of school age. There can be no doubt that these girls have very little chance of acquiring a complete education (that is, completing secondary school). Finally, a large majority of poor, young women become

sexually active by the age of 20: in at least three of these eight countries, over 70% of the women in the poorest quintile begin their sex lives before that age. In that light, it is hardly surprising that (Haiti apart), more than 50% are mothers by the age of 20.

By contrast, women in the upper socio-economic quintile postpone their triad. This is particularly marked in reproduction and union, since early pregnancy is almost non-existent and, in most countries, fewer than 20% of women in this group married or became pregnant before the age of 20. The differences with sexual initiation persist, but are less marked. As regards early sexual activity, all countries have rates of 10% or under, but in only three of the eight countries did 50% or more of women in the higher socio-economic quintile become sexually active before the age of 20.

Three conclusions may be drawn. First, young people from the extremes of the socio-economic scale display dissimilar reproductive conduct. The poorest sector engages in early sexual, marital and reproductive activity, which exacerbates this group's social and economic disadvantages. Second, and in policy terms, two lines of action are key to modifying this pattern of early activity. The first of these consists of measures that respond to the existing situation in order to minimize its effect. In this respect, it is generally acknowledged that poor youths face high levels of reproductive health risks from the onset of adolescence, because of their early sexual initiation and the sociocultural barriers to teaching sexual issues to very young boys and girls (McDevitt et al, 1996). These measures should thus focus on enhancing education —so as to obviate harmful and risky practices— and on developing services and mechanisms to prevent unwanted pregnancies, forced unions or venereal diseases. The second line of action consists of measures that focus on preventing dysfunctional behaviour and on promoting the social integration of poor youths. These measures should promote later unions and responsibility among young people on sexual decision-making. Third, the contrast between extreme socio-economic quintiles confirms that there is a "syndrome" (that is, a series of events that act concomitantly) among Latin American and Caribbean youth with respect to the sexual/marital/reproductive triad. The smaller disparities between quintiles in terms of sexual activity, however, suggest that this syndrome can be broken, thus separating sexual activity from marriage and reproduction. This would be facilitated by the application of "effect minimization" measures (which in practice facilitate the separation of sexual activity from reproduction), but would ultimately depend on strong social forces that promote early sexual initiation in an economically and socioculturally advanced environment. This would limit the more dysfunctional expressions of the early triad, although questions about sexual maturity would remain, as would the ethical debate about pre-marital sexual relations.

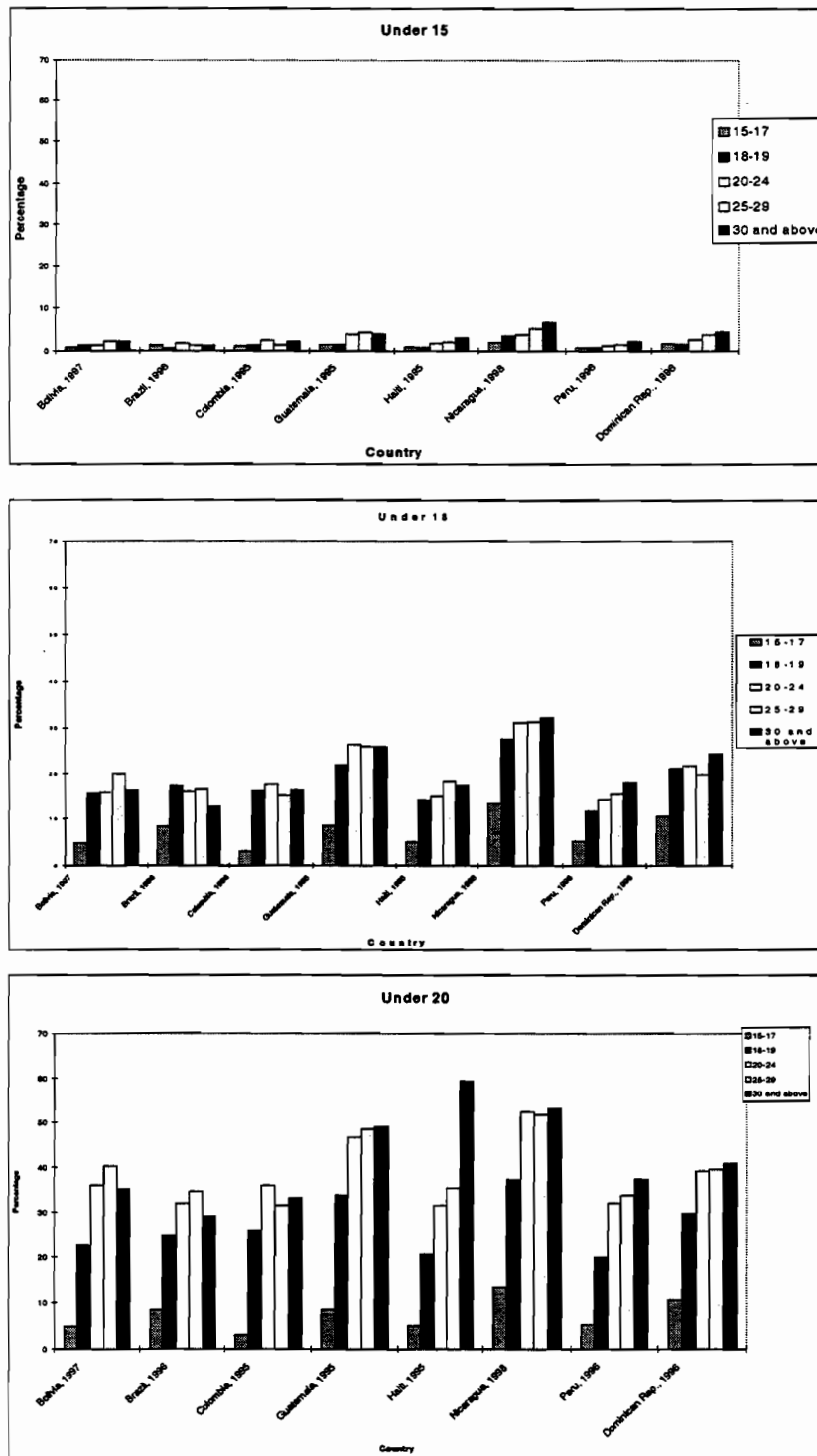
An analysis by cohort provides additional useful information on the evolution of the sexual/marital/reproductive triad, on which there are opposing views. One view highlights changes in sexual conduct and asserts that the greater levels of permissiveness among youths is lowering the age of sexual initiation. Another view takes account of the "syndrome" nature of the triad and maintains that the predominant forces are prompting youths to delay marriage. Hence, since sexual activity is intrinsically linked to the formation of stable unions, sexual activity begins at a later age. The available figures support the latter view, although the evidence is less consistent when applied to sexual activity.

As figure IV.5 shows, in all the countries of the region except Brazil, the percentage of young women who were mothers at the age of 15 or younger is lower among those cohorts currently young. It is worth noting that there has been a change in the reproductive behaviour of the younger generations — particularly those who were teenagers at the time of the survey— compared to preceding generations. This is positive given the unfavourable biosocial effects of early pregnancy. The outlook for reproduction during adolescence, however, is less encouraging, since three countries show a somewhat erratic pattern. According to DHS data, the percentage of Brazilian women who were mothers before the age of 20 is

greater in the young cohorts than in the adult cohorts (women aged 30 or over at the time of the survey). This is not surprising, since teenage pregnancies have increased in Brazil. In Bolivia and Colombia, this indicator has increased in one cohort of the young group —25 to 29 in Bolivia and 20 to 24 in Colombia— which means that no clear trend is yet evident. In the other five countries, the young cohorts—in this case, women aged 20 to 29 at the time of the survey— have their first child at an earlier age than preceding cohorts; in other words, young people begin their reproductive life at a later age than their mothers.

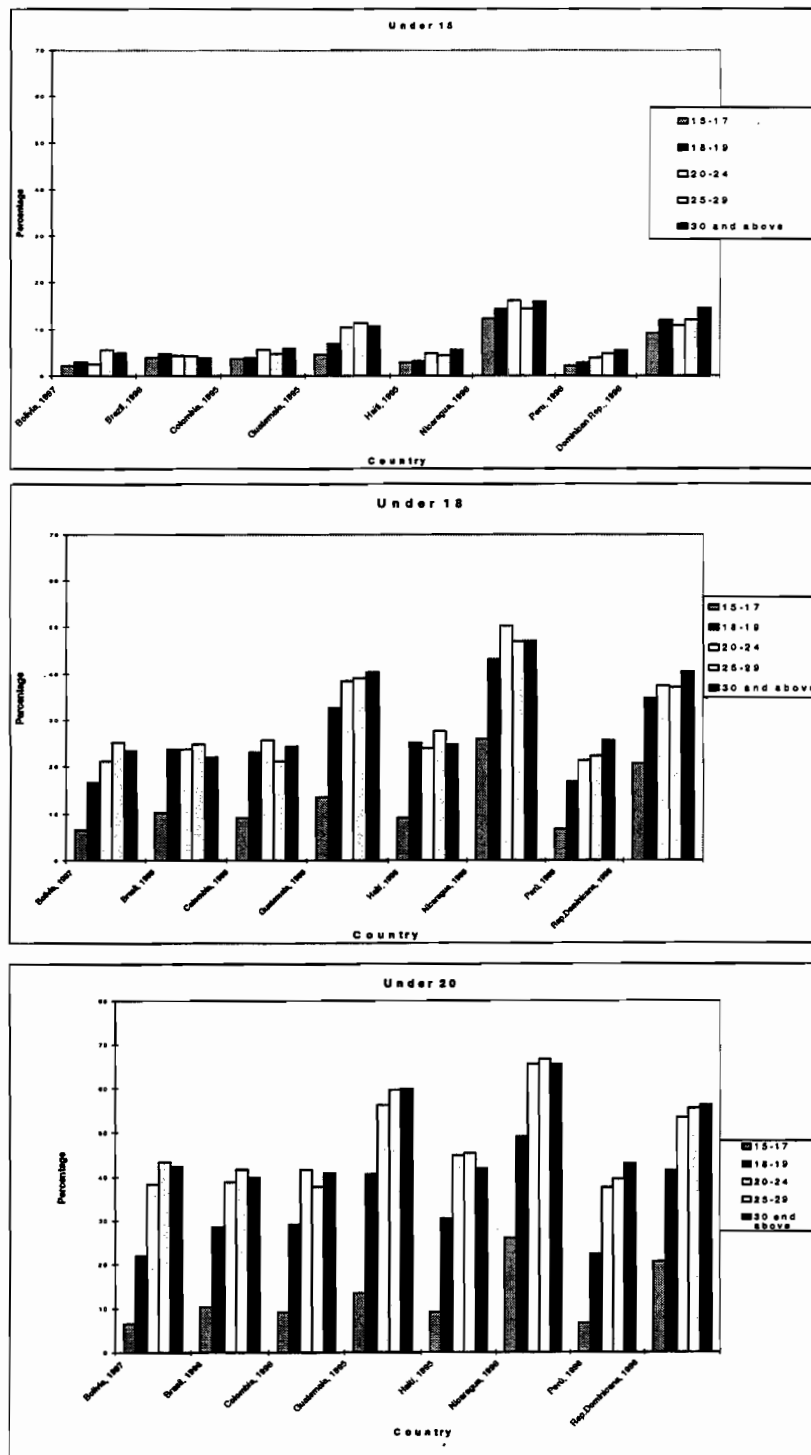
In terms of generational change, there are significant similarities between reproduction and the marital and sexual component of the triad, but there are also some differences (see figures IV.6 and IV.7). The formation of unions and sexual activity before the age of 15 are less common among the younger generations. In Brazil, however, the adolescent cohort includes a higher proportion of sexually active youths under 15 who were in unions at the time of the survey than in the other young and adult cohorts. In Colombia, Haiti, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, the trend is not clearly downwards, as it is for births to those under 15. An examination of teenage unions and sexual activity reveals more significant differences. According to the data, in four countries the percentage of those who become sexually active before the age of 20 is greater among younger people than adults (supporting the view that greater sexual freedom has lowered the age at which youths have their first sexual encounter). In the other four countries, the opposite is true (supporting the view that the patterns in all three parts of the triad have changed). In sum, as a result of a variety of forces that appear to be working in opposite directions, the pattern of sexual initiation among young people in the countries analyzed is somewhat erratic.

Figure IV.5  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG AND TEENAGE MOTHERS  
 BY COHORT, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**



Source: Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.

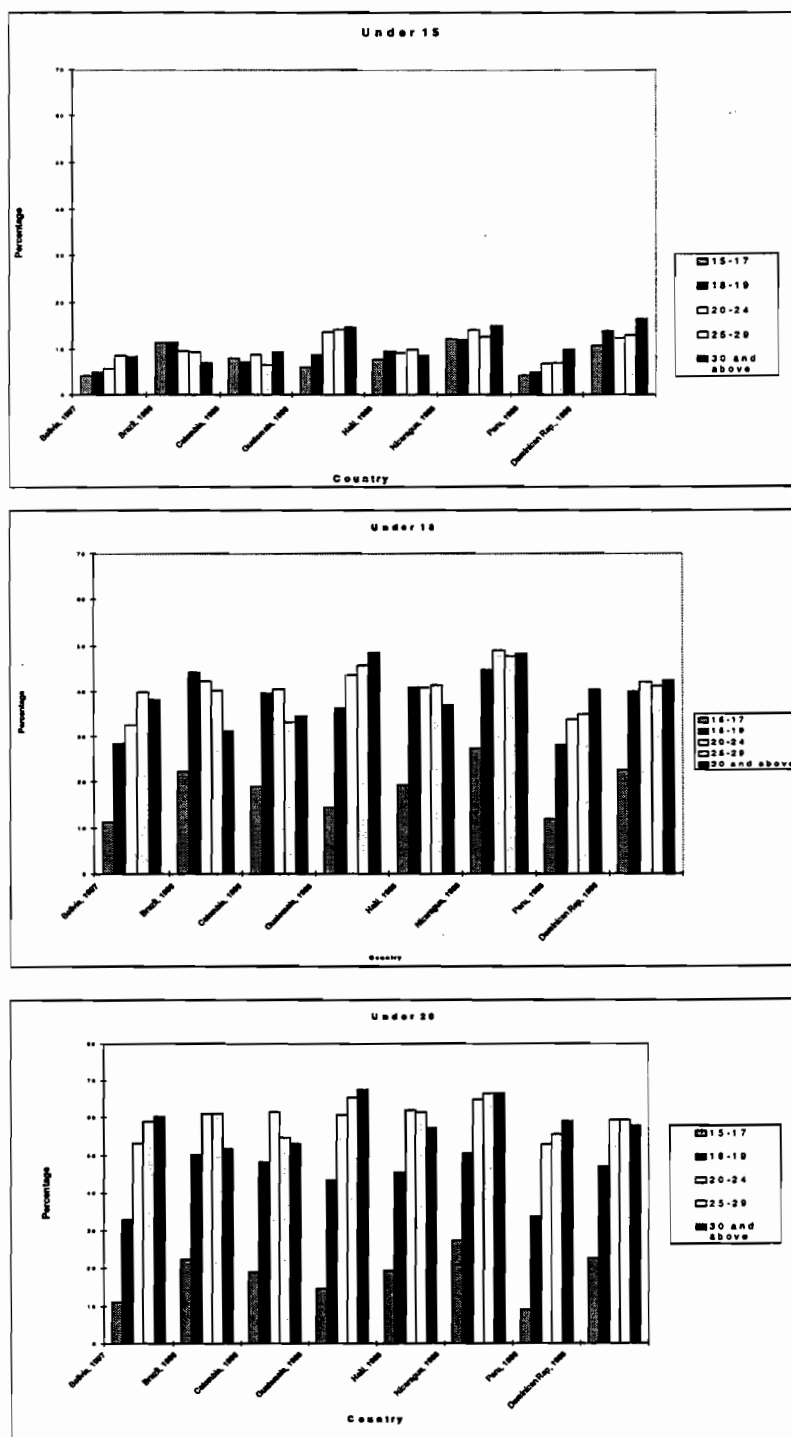
Figure IV.6  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN EARLY AND TEENAGE UNIONS BY COHORT, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**



Source: Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.



Figure IV.7  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO BECOME SEXUALLY ACTIVE EARLY AND IN ADOLESCENCE BY COHORT, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**



Source: Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.

The Brazilian case offers more clues to the complex evolution of the triad. A higher percentage of young Brazilian women (aged 20-24) became sexually active before they were 20 than those over 30.<sup>17</sup> However, these women did not form a union earlier than the adults, despite the fact that more of them became mothers before the age of 20. How should this be interpreted? It should be viewed in light of the fact that a growing number became sexually active before forming a union but few had access to birth control. In Brazil, the view that a new sexual culture has emerged among young people appears to be true. This new culture is more tolerant and permissive, and teenagers are more exposed to sexual stimuli. This has encouraged earlier sexual initiation. Since this new sexual culture among adolescents is not matched by a new reproductive culture oriented towards the use of birth control, teenage pregnancies have increased. This is not the case with sexual activity among young people and adults, who have developed a new reproductive culture that favours birth control.

The results of the triad's evolution should also be examined, especially in terms of the socio-economic disparities among young men and women. It is worrying that in most countries —Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru and the Dominican Republic— there are opposing trends among women in the lower and upper socio-economic bracket. More poor, young women experience sexual/marital/reproductive initiation before they are 20 than poor adults (in other words, the trend is occurring earlier among the poor), while the opposite is the case for young women from more affluent backgrounds, especially in terms of union and fertility, and less clearly so in matters of sexual activity.

These findings prompt reflection, raise concern and should spur action. One "reassuring" view of demographic disparities and inequities is that total fertility rates among the various socio-economic groups will converge in the long term. But with regard to a particularly important dimension of reproductive behaviour (which is not total fertility but the set of factors that help account for fertility in the early stages of the reproductive cycle, and whose consequences are very important in the lives of individuals), the figures given here reveal that such a convergence is not happening. On the contrary, the disparities between socio-economic groups are growing. Poor young people, who already experience an earlier triad than those from wealthy homes, are initiating their triad even earlier, placing them at an even greater disadvantage.

#### **D. SEXUALITY, MARRIAGE AND REPRODUCTION AMONG YOUTHS: SOME SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUITIES**

Socio-economic disparities in sexual, marital and reproductive issues are not only associated with the triad examined above. The conditions of sexual conduct (the risk of contracting an illness, for example, or an unwanted pregnancy), nuptiality (especially the institutional arrangement that formalizes a union), and reproduction (particularly the desire or otherwise to have children and support in raising them) differ according to a youth's socio-economic background.

The conditions in which sexual relations occur prompt two concerns. The first is related to the type of union, and the second to the risks associated with it. As regards the first, the discussion of the triad of sexual, marital and reproductive initiation has revealed a trend towards greater extra-marital sex, especially among teenagers and young people. However, the available evidence on all women of reproductive age focuses on sexual activity prior to the first union (premarital), and there is little evidence

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<sup>17</sup> Age at the time of the survey (1996).

on women's behaviour after the formation of the union. The available data is inconclusive. Although in several countries, such as Brazil and Colombia, premarital sexual activity among teenagers and young women is more frequent than in the past, in others the trend is stable and even downward (see table IV.8). In any case, and independently of the trends and ethical considerations, pre- and extra-marital sexual activity is an issue of great interest since it might involve increased reproductive health risks, given the greater likelihood of multiple sexual partners and a higher probability of unwanted pregnancies.

Table IV.8

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 25-49 WHO WERE VIRGINS WHEN THEY MARRIED, BY QUINQUENNIAL GROUPS, 1995-1998**

Country	Cohorts				
	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
Bolivia (1998)	44.6	46.6	43.1	47.1	46.1
Brazil (1996)	48.8	55.1	56.0	63.9	72.7
Colombia (1995)	51.7	56.2	59.0	65.0	64.7
Guatemala (1995)	74.1	73.8	71.6	68.8	67.9
Haiti (1995)	39.1	40.9	42.1	43.3	42.5
Nicaragua (1998)	77.7	74.2	72.4	71.2	68.4
Peru (1996)	46.8	42.9	42.2	42.6	48.4
Dominican Rep. (1996)	75.1	77.2	76.3	76.4	76.7

**Source:** Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

The second concern is associated with the precautions taken by women and couples to prevent venereal diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Two very simple facts linked to sexual behaviour among young people and social inequities are a cause for concern. Given the importance of HIV/AIDS as an illness and cause of death, the countries of the region introduced various public information programmes to promote the use of prophylactics, especially condoms. National and subnational DHS data reveal differences on both levels.

With respect to AIDS awareness, there are two clear groups: (i) those countries where almost all women (95% and above) "have heard about AIDS": Brazil, Colombia, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and (ii) those countries where at least 10% of women "have not heard about AIDS": Bolivia, Guatemala and, to a lesser extent, Peru. While in the first group of countries there is a sub-group of women—such as poor adolescents—where absence of AIDS awareness can surpass 5%, it is in the second group that socio-economic and age inequalities are more marked. In Bolivia, for example, 65% of young women in the lowest socio-economic quintile are completely unaware of AIDS—and at an age when most of them are sexually active—compared to 2% of young people in the highest quintile. Some 75% of poor teenage girls in Guatemala—whose sexual initiation is early—"have not heard about AIDS", double the rate in the highest socio-economic quintile (see table IV.9). In sum, it is clear that adolescents in a number of countries of the region—especially those who are poor—are clearly vulnerable to the threat of AIDS. This makes it important to redouble efforts to improve the provision of education and information. It is worth noting that poverty or demographic disadvantages do not necessarily impede raising AIDS

awareness, as demonstrated by the Haitian and Nicaraguan cases, although both countries still need to make further progress on this front among poor teenage girls. In this respect, and given the sociocultural characteristics of the three countries that record the lowest level of AIDS awareness, it is likely that cultural and linguistic differences among some of their ethnic groups explain these alarming figures. Bilingual education initiatives, however, such as those successfully tried in some villages in the altiplano, can be very helpful in raising AIDS awareness.

As regards the use of condoms, these are far from popular among young people; indeed, most claimed not to have used a condom in their last sexual relationship (see table IV.10). The reliability of this information is somewhat questionable, since it does not distinguish between types of sexual relationship (with a stable or occasional partner, for example) and refers only to the last sexual relationship. It nevertheless shows that a greater percentage of youths from the upper socio-economic strata in some countries (Brazil, Colombia, Peru) use condoms, which might reflect greater sexual permissiveness in those countries.

Table IV.9  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 15-49  
THAT "HAVE NOT HEARD ABOUT AIDS", BY AGE GROUP AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
QUINTILE, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**

Country, year and socio-economic quintile	Age group					Total
	15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 and above	
Bolivia, 1997, Q1	64.0	67.6	64.2	65.8	72.1	68.8
Bolivia, 1997, Q5	5.8	7.6	2.2	1.3	0.9	2.6
Bolivia, 1997, total	18.5	16.4	16.5	18.5	25.8	21.2
Brazil, 1996, Q1	4.2	0.6	1.9	0.9	1.3	1.7
Brazil, 1996, Q5	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Brazil, 1996 total	1.0	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.4
Colombia, 1995, Q1	11.9	5.1	3.6	2.1	4.9	5.2
Colombia, 1995, Q5	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.2
Colombia, 1995, total	2.2	1.5	1.0	0.5	1.1	1.2
Guatemala, 1995, Q1	77.8	74.4	66.0	53.3	71.0	68.5
Guatemala, 1995, Q5	6.8	6.0	1.5	3.9	1.9	3.3
Guatemala, 1995, total	32.0	32.9	28.4	24.7	28.7	28.9
Haiti, 1995, Q1	19.4	6.3	3.9	4.0	4.1	6.1
Haiti, 1995, Q5	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Haiti, 1995, total	4.7	1.7	1.0	0.9	1.6	1.9
Nicaragua, 1998, Q1	22.9	15.4	17.8	12.4	12.9	15.5
Nicaragua, 1998, Q5	1.5	0.3	1.1	0.0	0.5	0.6
Nicaragua, 1998, total	7.2	3.9	4.7	3.5	3.7	4.4
Peru, 1996, Q1	51.0	43.8	39.8	38.6	47.4	44.9
Peru, 1996, Q5	2.9	1.9	0.6	0.1	0.3	0.8
Peru, 1996, total	12.2	10.1	9.0	9.0	11.8	10.8
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q1	2.5	1.8	0.8	0.5	0.9	1.1
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1
Dominican Republic, 1996, total	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.3

Source: Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.

Note: Q1 = lowest socio-economic quintile; Q5 = highest socio-economic quintile.

Table IV.10

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 15-49 WHO "DID NOT USE A CONDOM IN THEIR LAST SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP", BY AGE GROUP AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUINTILE, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**

Country, year and socioeconomic quintile	Age group					Total
	15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 and above	
Bolivia, 1997, Q1	93.9	98.2	94.1	93.1	91.9	92.7
Bolivia, 1997, Q5	79.4	88.3	87.1	88.2	94.0	91.7
Bolivia, 1997, total	90.1	94.5	92.6	92.8	94.4	93.7
Brazil, 1996, Q1	84.9	86.4	94.1	95.0	97.5	95.2
Brazil, 1996, Q5	70.0	73.1	73.3	79.9	88.5	84.4
Brazil, 1996 total	74.2	80.0	84.7	86.9	92.2	89.0
Colombia, 1995, Q1	93.1	95.7	96.7	95.5	98.0	97.0
Colombia, 1995, Q5	70.3	79.1	80.9	80.9	91.2	87.5
Colombia, 1995, total	87.0	90.0	90.7	90.8	94.0	92.5
Guatemala, 1995, Q1	98.5	100.0	94.6	98.7	97.7	97.5
Guatemala, 1995, Q5	90.6	90.6	90.9	85.2	94.2	92.1
Guatemala, 1995, total	97.8	96.2	95.4	93.6	96.1	95.6
Haiti, 1995, Q1	...	...	...	...	...	...
Haiti, 1995, Q5	...	...	...	...	...	...
Haiti, 1995, total	...	...	...	...	...	...
Nicaragua, 1998, Q1	97.8	94.4	95.7	94.3	96.2	95.7
Nicaragua, 1998, Q5	97.1	90.1	95.5	93.1	94.0	94.0
Nicaragua, 1998, total	97.2	93.2	95.3	94.6	95.6	95.3
Peru, 1996, Q1	97.9	96.4	96.0	97.3	97.0	96.9
Peru, 1996, Q5	79.1	78.1	81.9	82.7	90.4	87.7
Peru, 1996, total	89.2	90.0	92.1	91.9	94.1	93.1
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q1	96.3	95.8	96.0	97.6	97.6	97.1
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q5	100.0	86.5	90.4	93.7	95.0	93.8
Dominican Republic, 1996, total	96.7	95.6	95.2	95.9	96.1	95.9

Source: On the basis of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.

Note: Q1 = lowest socio-economic quintile; Q5 = highest socio-economic quintile.

There are sharp socio-economic differences in the age when unions are formed and the nature of the unions themselves. Figures IV.8, IV.9 and IV.10 show that age- and country-specific factors influence the formation of unions. There is little more to add with respect to the former factors, since attention has already been drawn to the gradual shift from single status to unions (of any type) as women get older, a development that is clearly confirmed by the data in figure IV.8. The data here also confirm some of the national characteristics of the triad examined earlier, and add other, country-specific features of the type of union. In the latter regard, there are two groups: (i) those countries where marriage is the most common form of union among young people; and (ii) those countries where cohabitation or consensual union are the norm, especially in Haiti, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic and, to a lesser extent, Colombia and Peru.

Figure IV.8 provides other interesting data:

(a) young widows or divorcees account for only a meagre fraction of the total, since widowhood and divorce tend to occur late in life;

(b) the proportion of consensual partnerships among teenage girls in a union is high, surpassing the proportion of married teenagers in countries where marriage is the norm, such as Guatemala;

(c) "separation from the partner" is more common in countries where consensual unions predominate, both for circumstantial reasons and because of definitive separations. In Nicaragua, for example, more than 15% of young women are separated, while in Bolivia and Peru the figure barely exceeds 5%;

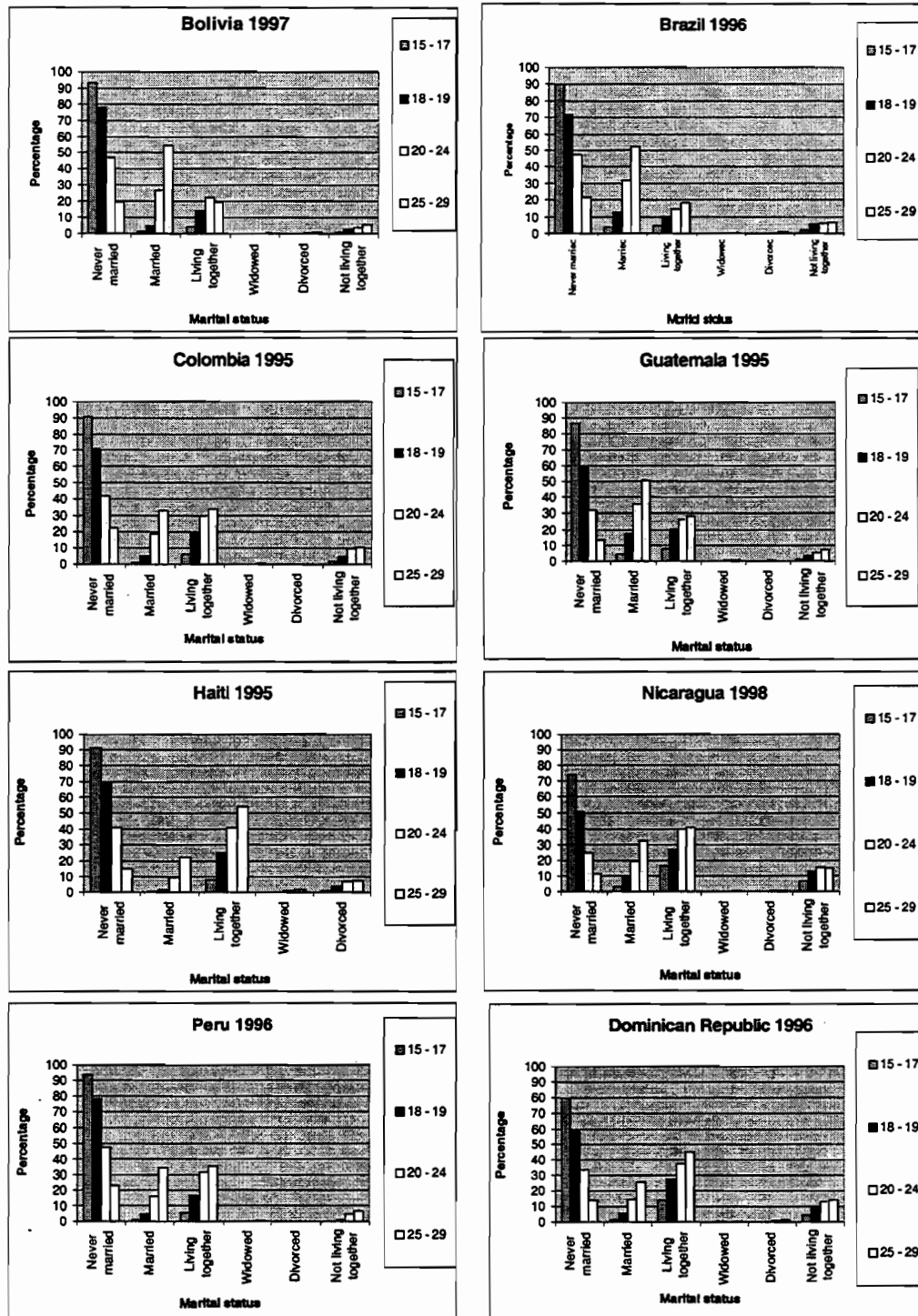
(d) there is no clear link between the classification of the triad in terms of when it occurs (early/late) and the classification that differentiates countries according to the main type of union. The triad begins late in Haiti and Bolivia, for example, despite their backwardness in demographic transition. This is because they are classified differently depending on the main type of union.

The comparison between socio-economic groups within countries is perhaps more relevant than that between countries, as figures IV.9 and IV.10 demonstrate. Restating previous findings, the percentage of single women —especially teenagers— between the two extreme socio-economic quintiles is noticeably different; there are relatively fewer women in unions among the upper socio-economic stratum. The differences between the two socio-economic groups are not only quantitative but also qualitative, because in all countries except Haiti marriage predominates among those young women from the upper socio-economic level who are in unions (see figure IV.10).<sup>18</sup> A deterministic conclusion should not be drawn from the above, since formal marriage is an eventual safeguard against poverty. It is nevertheless worth noting the policy implications in view of the more fragile nature of consensual unions and the problems of reproductive health programmes that focus on poor couples. The latter are largely in consensual rather than lawful unions, and could therefore become marginalized from some institutional initiatives.

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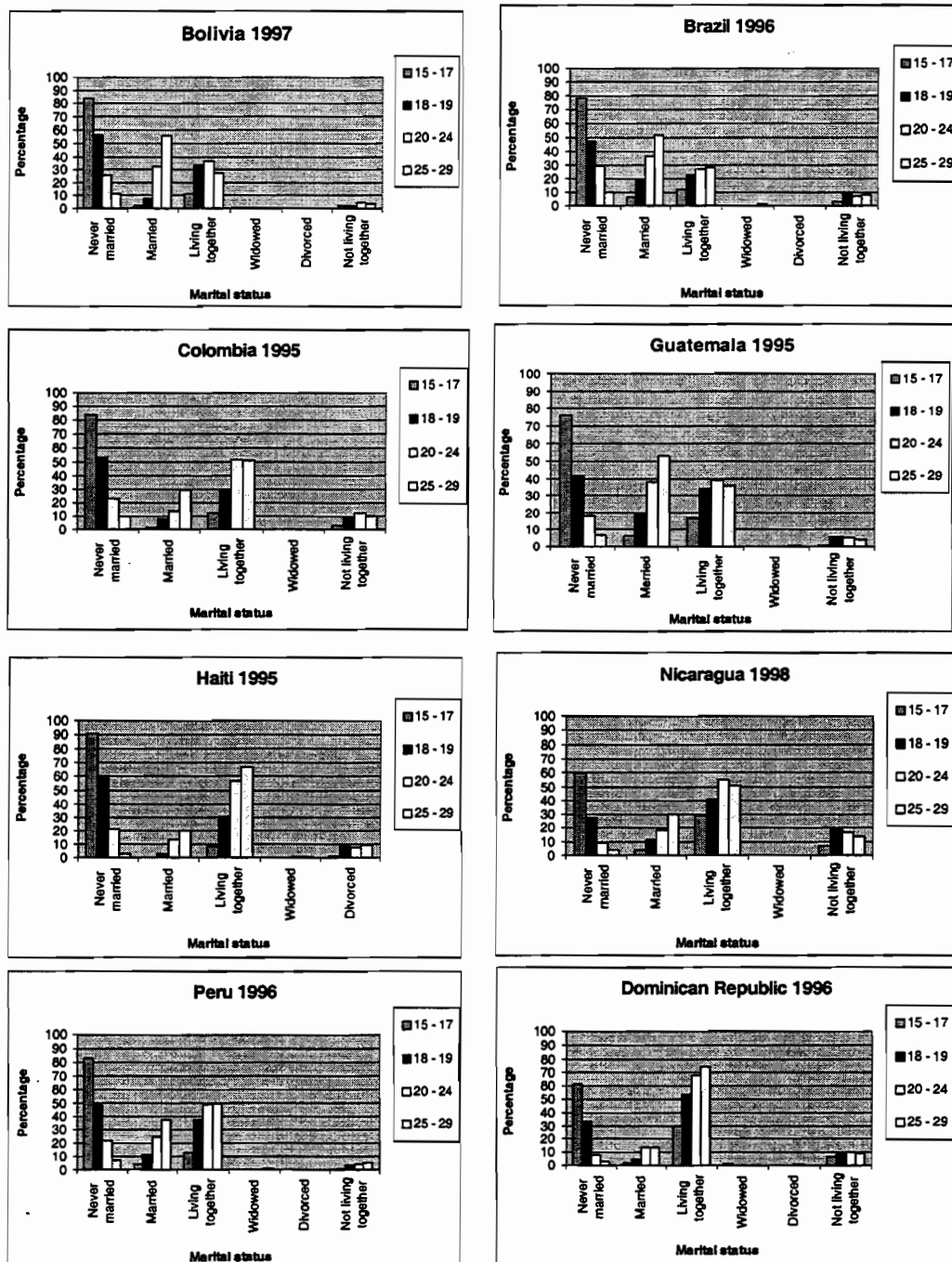
<sup>18</sup> In the case of teenagers, the figures are less conclusive because in several countries, including in the higher quintile, cohabitation predominates (see figure IV.10).

Figure IV.8  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN BY AGE GROUP;  
 SELECTED COUNTRIES**  
*(Percentages)*



Source: Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.

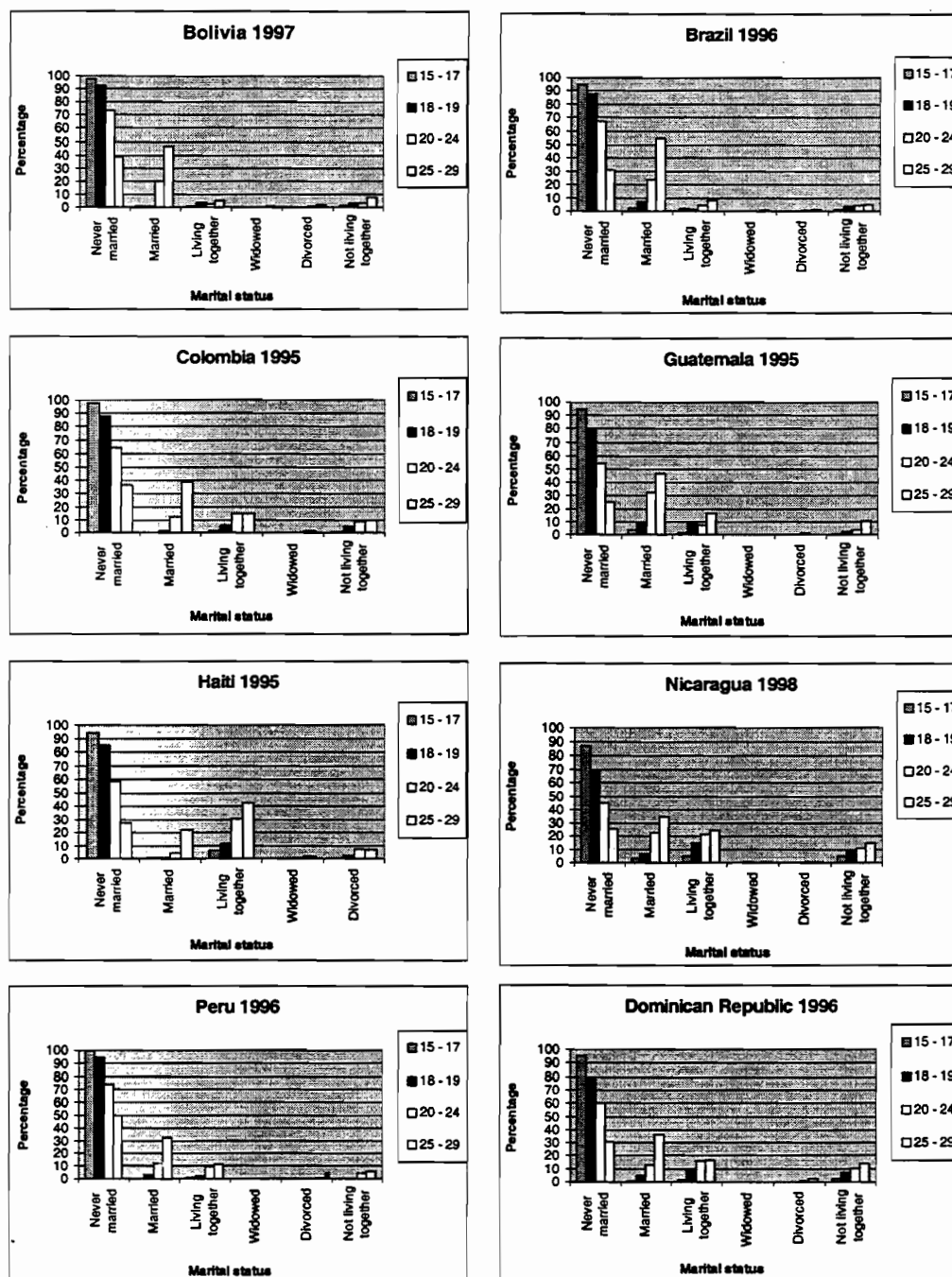
Figure IV.9  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN BY AGE GROUP FOR THE LOWEST SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUINTILE; SELECTED COUNTRIES**  
*(Percentages)*



Source: Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.



Figure IV.10  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN BY AGE GROUP, FOR THE HIGHEST SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUINTILE; SELECTED COUNTRIES**  
*(Percentages)*



Source: Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.

As regards reproductive inequalities, and given data constraints, it seems prudent to recommend further analysis to complement the surveys of women's reproductive preferences. Table IV.11 is the clearest expression of unwanted births by age and socio-economic quintiles. It also allows the rate of unwanted pregnancies among young people to be assessed, which was not possible with the data on discrepancies between observed births and reproductive preferences. The data prompt two main conclusions:

(i) there is a relative, if not total, correlation between the observed births-unwanted pregnancy gap (see figure IV.3) and the percentage of last unwanted children. Bolivia and Peru illustrate this correlation while Nicaragua does not, since Nicaragua's rate of unwanted pregnancies is lower than would be expected in view of the vast gap between reproductive aspirations and reality;

(ii) with very few exceptions, the proportion of unwanted pregnancies tends to increase with age; in particular, the rates of last unwanted births among women aged 30 and over are systematically the highest. This is unsurprising, since it is wrongly said that those births that are avoided (or that women wish to avoid) during periods of declining fertility are higher-order births, precisely the kind that occur at a more advanced age. The pattern for young people is somewhat irregular, since in some countries teenage girls have lower rates of unwanted pregnancies, while in others it is 20-24 year olds who do so. In any case, the data point to the difficulty of intervening in teenage fertility, since—either because of birth factors, posteriori rationalization, lack of alternative life plans or an intrinsic maternal instinct in teenagers— young women have little interest in controlling their fertility. Finally, and again virtually without exception—apart from Haiti and teenagers in Brazil and Nicaragua— poor women's reproductive rights are more frequently vulnerable, since the indices of unwanted last pregnancies among this group is significantly higher. In all countries except Haiti, the "unwanted" indices of the last pregnancy among young women from the highest socio-economic quintile was below 15%,<sup>19</sup> while in a number of countries this figure rose to over 30% among youths in the lowest quintile.

## E. BIRTH CONTROL

One of the main determinants of reproductive health conditions and the exercise of reproductive rights is the availability of birth control methods. Their use prevents pregnancies that pose risks to women's health and their availability facilitates the fundamental exercise of reproductive rights, which are those associated with a couple's ability to make free, sovereign, and informed decisions about when to have children and how many to have. Some aspects of the coverage and availability of birth control in Latin America and the Caribbean will be examined below, with particular emphasis on the situation of young people and socio-economically disadvantaged sector.

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<sup>19</sup> The data fail to note that more than 85% of last wanted pregnancies were "planned", since table IV.12 shows that only a fraction of these were wanted only "after becoming pregnant".

Table IV.11

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 15-49 WHO "DID NOT WANT MORE CHILDREN" DURING THEIR LAST PREGNANCY, BY AGE GROUP AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUINTILE, 1995-1998**

Country, year and socio-economic quintile	Age group					Total
	15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 and above	
Bolivia, 1997, Q1	9.4	12.2	28.3	35.1	61.7	46.7
Bolivia, 1997, Q5	0.0	8.3	13.7	9.0	16.9	13.6
Bolivia, 1997, total	10.0	11.2	17.8	27.7	46.3	33.3
Brazil, 1996, Q1	11.1	10.5	18.4	27.8	44.4	29.4
Brazil, 1996, Q5	15.4	6.3	7.2	14.8	27.5	17.8
Brazil, 1996 total	16.2	10.5	14.9	19.0	33.7	23.2
Colombia, 1995, Q1	7.4	6.9	17.2	33.1	50.8	32.8
Colombia, 1995, Q5	0.0	7.7	5.6	10.5	22.1	14.7
Colombia, 1995, total	4.7	5.4	11.1	21.4	35.1	22.6
Guatemala, 1995, Q1	2.2	3.6	7.0	12.2	21.0	14.6
Guatemala, 1995, Q5	0.0	15.2	8.4	11.1	18.8	13.9
Guatemala, 1995, total	5.1	6.2	7.4	10.6	20.3	13.5
Haiti, 1995, Q1	0.0	5.6	15.2	24.5	47.4	34.5
Haiti, 1995, Q5	14.3	33.3	19.2	27.5	39.8	31.5
Haiti, 1995, total	9.3	13.8	17.7	29.6	50.4	36.2
Nicaragua, 1998, Q1	2.7	12.3	13.1	21.6	28.2	20.3
Nicaragua, 1998, Q5	12.5	6.7	8.6	9.5	21.1	13.7
Nicaragua, 1998, total	7.6	10.1	10.9	17.7	27.6	18.3
Peru, 1996, Q1	13.1	16.0	30.6	48.9	69.5	51.8
Peru, 1996, Q5	0.0	8.3	12.3	11.3	25.8	19.5
Peru, 1996, total	14.8	13.2	19.5	31.7	51.5	36.9
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q1	0.0	0.0	7.8	17.7	33.5	16.3
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q5	0.0	0.0	2.7	3.3	8.8	5.3
Dominican Republic, 1996, total	0.0	0.0	4.7	10.3	20.4	10.8

Source: Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.

Note: Q1 = lowest socio-economic quintile; Q5 = highest socio-economic quintile.

### 1. Familiarity with birth control

The swift growth of familiarity with birth control methods has been one of the most dynamic processes in the recent history of Latin American and Caribbean countries (CEPAL, 1998c). DHS data reveal a generalized familiarity with birth control methods in several countries of the region, but also disclose large sub-groups where awareness remains low (see table IV.12 and figure IV.11). Almost without exception, those aged 25-29 are most familiar with contraception, while teenagers are least familiar. This is because of the sexual, marital and reproductive dynamic of young people (as already shown, the percentage of youths who are sexually active, married and have reproductive experience increases systematically with age) and because of the sociocultural barriers and debates that develop as a result of young people's sexuality. Young people aged 25-29 are also more familiar with contraception than preceding generations, although in several countries this difference is marginal. These figures therefore show that exposure to information about modern birth control methods is not so recent a phenomenon in the region.

There is a strong link between the degree of women's familiarity with modern birth control methods and demographic transition. Two traits are prominent in Brazil, Colombia and the Dominican Republic: i) virtually all women (more than 99.5% of the total) are familiar with birth control; and ii) there are virtually no disparities in the degree of familiarity between socio-economic groups and between the different cohorts. In contrast, two countries whose demographic transition is tardy (Bolivia and Guatemala) have lower (under 90%) rates of familiarity and, perhaps more importantly, knowledge varies by socio-economic and age group. Specifically, a high percentage of women from socio-economically disadvantaged groups is unfamiliar with modern birth control methods—levels of awareness among poor teenage girls are below 50% (see table IV.12 and figure IV.11). There are disparities between age groups and socio-economic sectors in Haiti and Nicaragua, but less than 30% are unfamiliar with birth control.

These figures seem encouraging, since they reveal a widespread level of familiarity with modern contraception and help to identify those countries, socio-economic sectors and age groups where information and education should be increased. The reality, however, is not so promising, since familiarity can range from basic information about how to avoid pregnancy to an ability to manage the appropriate procedures. Recent research has shown that claims about familiarity with modern contraception do not necessarily imply knowledge about how to use these adequately, much less an adequate understanding of the reproductive system, especially among teenagers (CEPAL, 1998c; Mensch et al., 1998).

Table IV.12  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 15-49 WHO ARE FAMILIAR WITH MODERN CONTRACEPTION, BY AGE GROUP AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUINTILE, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**

Country, year and socioeconomic quintile	Age group					Total
	15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 and above	
Bolivia, 1997, Q 1	49.1	61.5	61.8	61.9	56.0	57.2
Bolivia, 1997, Q 5	95.8	94.3	97.6	98.7	99.2	97.9
Bolivia, 1997, total	84.3	88.0	89.5	89.9	85.1	86.7
Brazil, 1996, Q 1	96.5	99.4	98.7	99.7	99.1	98.8
Brazil, 1996, Q 5	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0
Brazil, 1996 total	99.0	99.7	99.5	99.9	100.0	99.6
Colombia, 1995, Q 1	91.0	99.1	99.4	100.0	99.2	98.3
Colombia, 1995, Q 5	99.4	99.5	99.7	99.7	99.9	99.8
Colombia, 1995, total	98.2	99.7	99.8	99.9	99.8	99.6
Guatemala, 1995, Q 1	30.3	48.6	55.2	62.6	58.2	54.1
Guatemala, 1995, Q 5	89.0	91.4	97.1	94.9	98.7	95.7
Guatemala, 1995, total	64.7	72.6	77.8	83.1	82.5	78.2
Haiti, 1995, Q 1	74.2	93.7	95.3	96.8	97.1	93.8
Haiti, 1995, Q 5	98.3	100.0	99.7	99.5	100.0	99.6
Haiti, 1995, total	92.8	98.5	98.5	98.8	98.7	97.8
Nicaragua, 1998, Q 1	80.9	86.7	93.3	93.1	93.4	90.8
Nicaragua, 1998, Q 5	97.2	99.0	99.3	100.0	99.3	99.1
Nicaragua, 1998, total	92.4	96.8	97.9	98.5	98.2	97.2
Peru, 1996, Q 1	64.3	80.7	84.8	90.3	83.3	82.4
Peru, 1996, Q 5	96.3	98.8	99.4	99.9	99.8	99.2
Peru, 1996, total	90.9	94.8	96.8	97.8	95.8	95.6
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q 1	98.5	98.1	98.8	99.5	99.3	99.0
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q 5	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Dominican Republic, 1996, total	99.3	99.4	99.7	99.9	99.9	99.7

Source: Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) database.

Note: Q1 = lowest socio-economic quintile; Q5 = highest socio-economic quintile.

Table IV.13

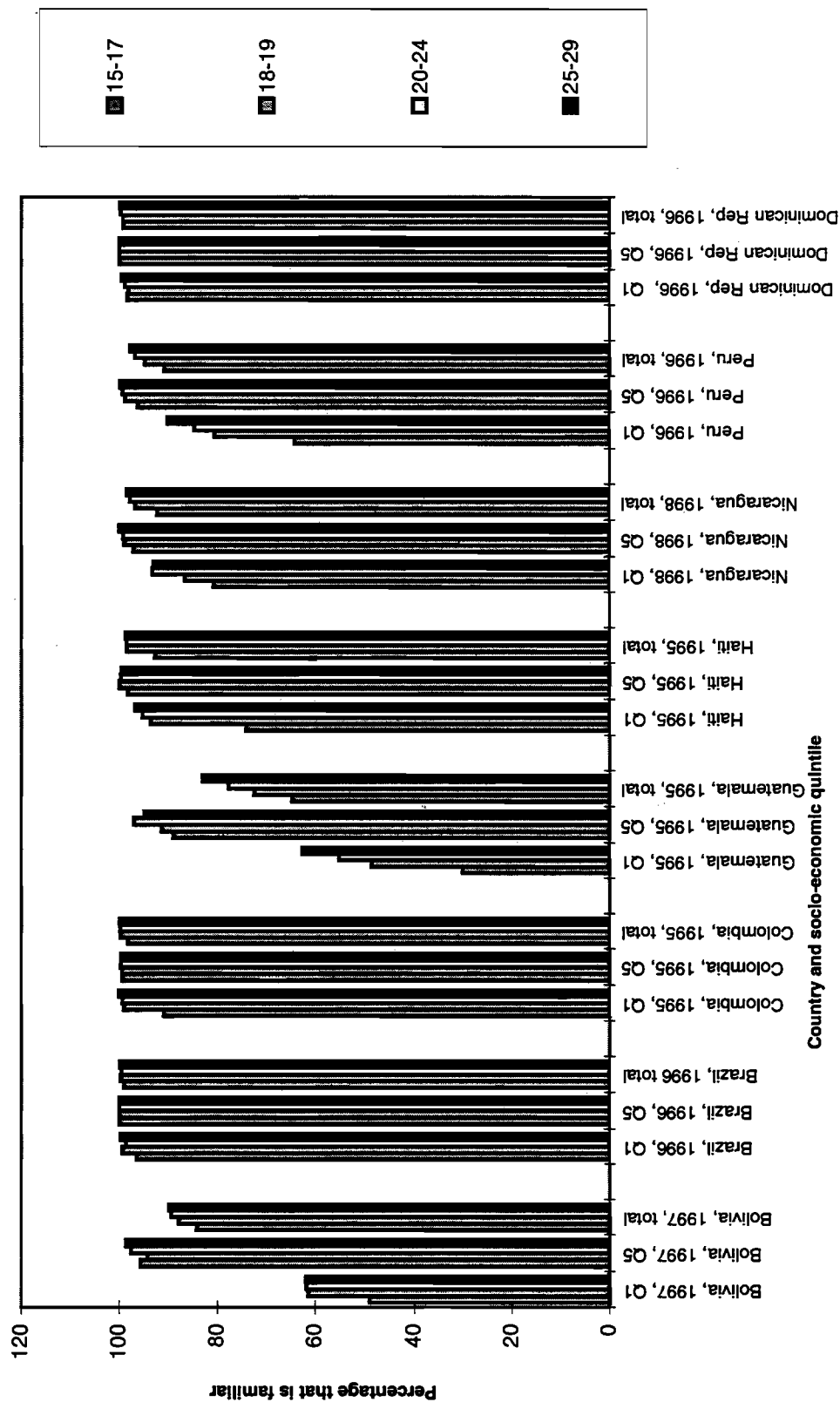
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 15-49 WHO USE MODERN CONTRACEPTION, BY AGE GROUP AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUINTILE, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**

Country, year and socio-economic quintile	Age group					Total
	15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 and above	
Bolivia, 1997, Q1	0.9	0.0	6.6	7.8	6.3	5.5
Bolivia, 1997, Q5	0.4	2.3	12.5	30.4	38.6	23.6
Bolivia, 1997, total	0.9	2.9	12.2	23.7	23.1	16.5
Brazil, 1996, Q1	8.7	19.1	33.0	54.2	54.3	41.7
Brazil, 1996, Q5	11.3	17.7	44.3	56.9	72.5	56.1
Brazil, 1996 total	9.0	20.8	40.6	59.0	66.4	51.0
Colombia, 1995, Q1	2.9	9.4	24.9	37.4	42.6	31.1
Colombia, 1995, Q5	2.2	8.1	25.1	37.0	53.5	37.7
Colombia, 1995, total	3.9	14.2	29.9	46.2	53.9	39.5
Guatemala, 1995, Q1	0.0	0.6	3.1	8.7	4.9	4.2
Guatemala, 1995, Q5	1.0	9.7	20.6	32.7	53.7	32.9
Guatemala, 1995, total	0.8	5.0	12.0	19.8	29.3	18.4
Haiti, 1995, Q1	0.0	0.0	0.8	7.2	4.9	3.6
Haiti, 1995, Q5	1.7	3.4	9.2	20.3	16.2	11.4
Haiti, 1995, total	1.6	3.2	7.8	13.3	11.8	8.9
Nicaragua, 1998, Q1	7.6	15.3	31.7	42.8	37.9	30.8
Nicaragua, 1998, Q5	4.7	9.6	26.7	43.5	58.1	38.9
Nicaragua, 1998, total	7.0	17.6	33.8	50.1	53.1	39.0
Peru, 1996, Q1	3.3	11.5	19.3	27.4	20.3	18.6
Peru, 1996, Q5	1.0	6.2	16.1	30.4	40.3	26.4
Peru, 1996, total	2.4	8.5	22.6	35.8	34.8	26.4
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q1	6.5	11.0	28.0	50.0	63.7	42.9
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q5	2.4	9.2	14.2	35.9	57.5	34.9
Dominican Republic, 1996, total	4.7	13.5	25.4	48.1	62.1	41.3

Source: Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) databases.

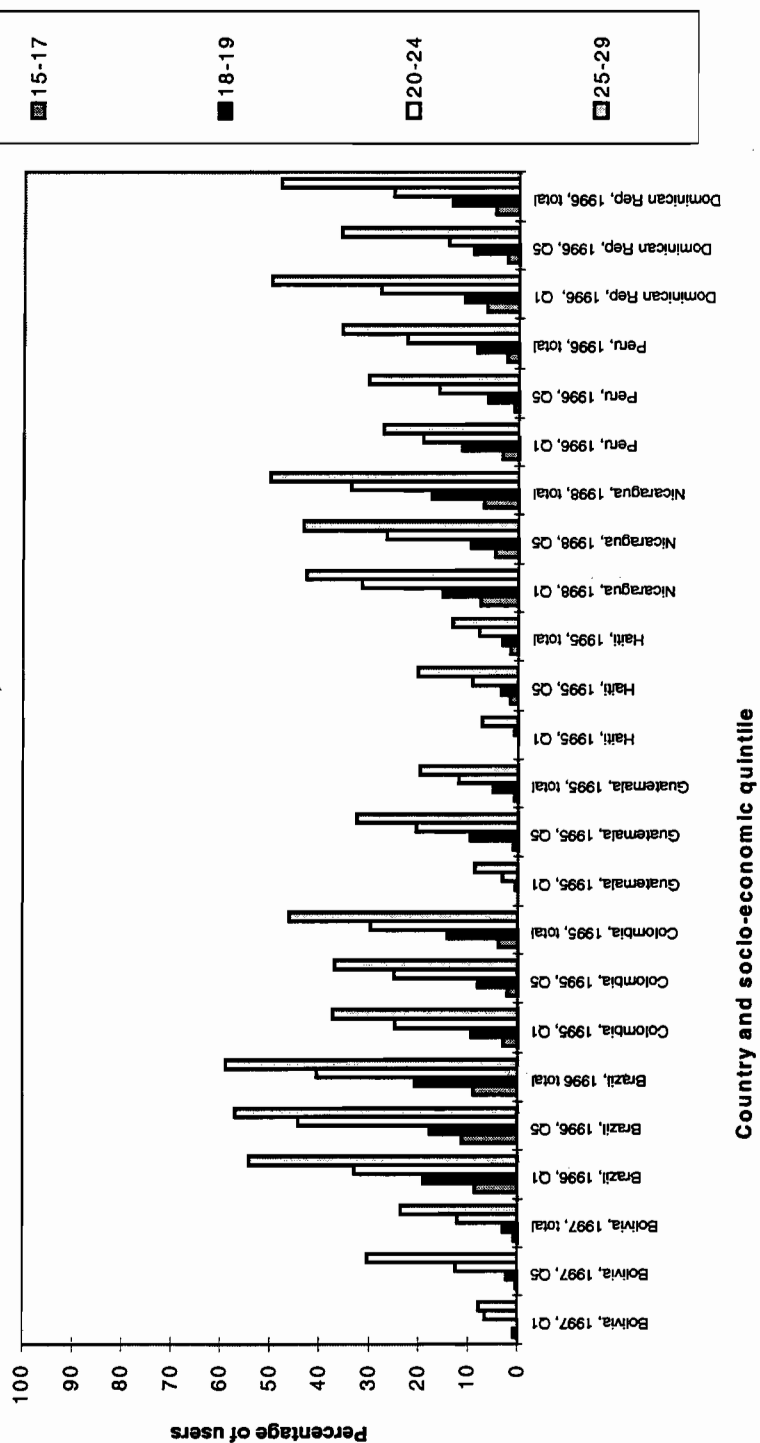
Note: Q1 = lowest socio-economic quintile; Q5 = highest socio-economic quintile.

Figure IV.11  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: FAMILIARITY WITH MODERN CONTRACEPTION AMONG YOUNG WOMEN BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL AND AGE GROUP, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998



Source: Table IV.12.

Figure IV.12  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: USE OF MODERN CONTRACEPTION AMONG  
 YOUNG WOMEN, BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL AND AGE GROUP, SELECTED  
 COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**





## 2. Contraceptive use

A comparison of figures IV.11 and IV.12, and tables IV.12 and V.13, shows that there is an enormous gap between familiarity with and use of modern contraceptive methods. This gap is not surprising in itself, since women might not need contraceptives. Among other reasons, they might not have a partner, might be pregnant or wish to become pregnant. Moreover, the use-prevalence curve by age—which systematically reveals less frequent use of modern birth control methods among teenage girls—does not necessarily show that this group has foresworn birth control; as highlighted above, the percentage of those under 20 who are sexually active or in unions is much lower than the indices among those cohorts that are in their twenties. It is nevertheless interesting to note that in some countries (particularly Bolivia, Guatemala and Haiti) the prevalence of modern contraceptive use is significantly lower in the poorest groups, despite the fact that these are characterized by a much earlier sexual/marital/reproductive triad.

Table IV.14 and figure IV.13 show the prevalence of modern contraceptive use among women in unions at the time of the survey. They also provide further evidence of age and socio-economic inequalities in regular access to birth control, since they take into account the distorting effect of the different patterns of union among socio-economic groups.

What, then, is happening among young Latin American women in their use of modern contraceptives?

Table IV.14

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN UNIONS AGED 15-49 IN UNIONS WHO USE MODERN CONTRACEPTION, BY AGE GROUP AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUINTILE, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**

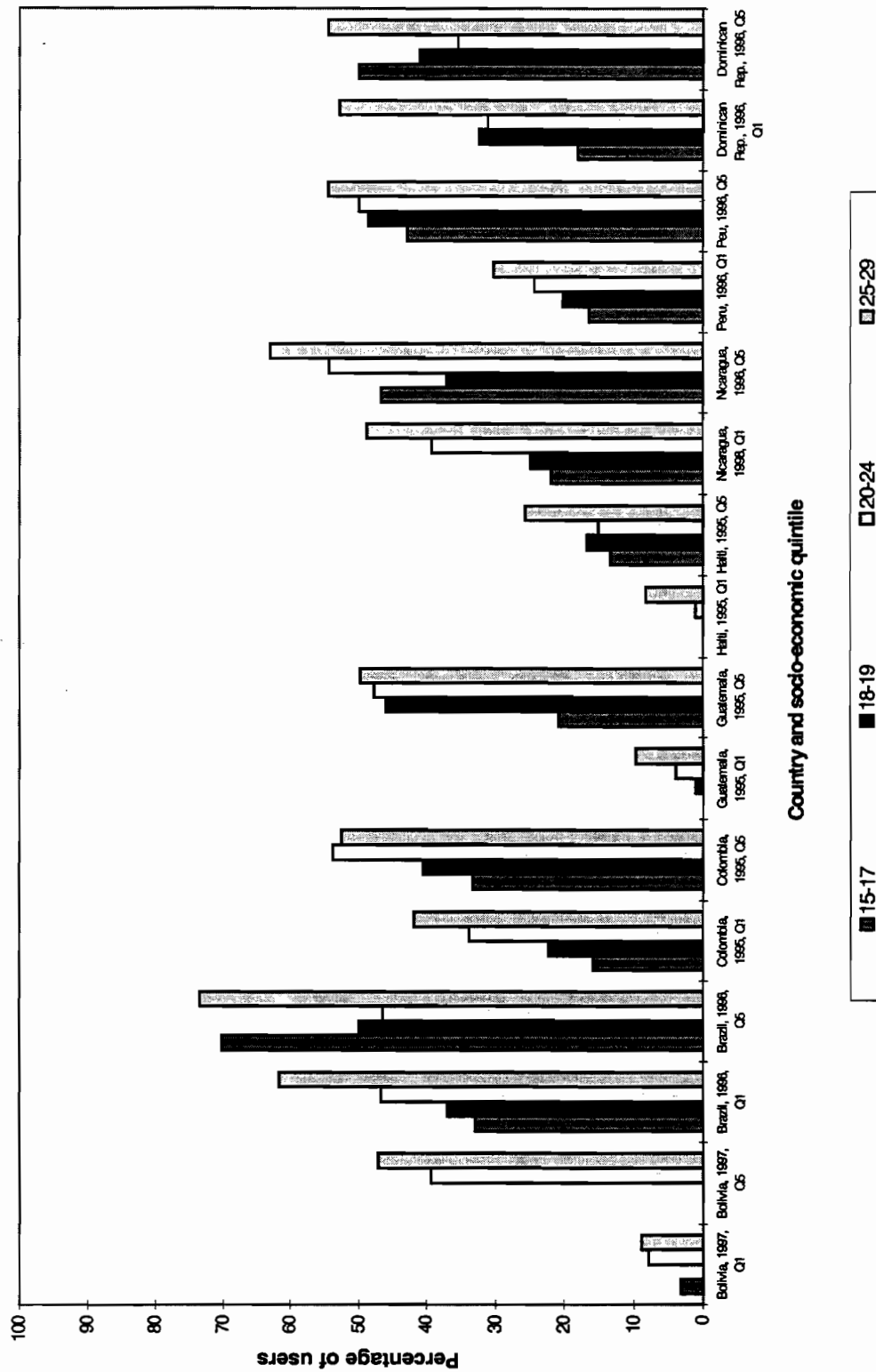
Country, year and socio-economic quintile	Age group					Total
	15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30 and above	
Bolivia, 1997, Q1	3.3	0.0	7.9	8.9	6.9	7.0
Bolivia, 1997, Q5	0.0	0.0	39.4	47.2	46.6	45.6
Brazil, 1996, Q1	32.9	37.0	46.8	61.7	58.3	54.7
Brazil, 1996, Q5	70.2	50.0	46.5	73.4	78.5	76.4
Colombia, 1995, Q1	15.8	22.4	33.8	41.9	47.1	41.6
Colombia, 1995, Q5	33.3	40.5	53.8	52.5	67.5	62.3
Guatemala, 1995, Q1	0.0	1.1	4.0	9.7	5.3	5.4
Guatemala, 1995, Q5	20.8	46.0	47.8	49.8	61.4	56.7
Haiti, 1995, Q1	0.0	0.0	1.1	8.3	5.3	5.0
Haiti, 1995, Q5	13.3	16.7	15.0	25.7	21.4	21.0
Nicaragua, 1998, Q1	21.9	25.0	39.2	48.8	41.9	40.1
Nicaragua, 1998, Q5	46.7	37.0	54.3	63.0	68.4	63.7
Peru, 1996, Q1	16.4	20.2	24.4	30.3	23.0	24.3
Peru, 1996, Q5	42.9	48.6	50.0	54.4	48.9	49.8
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q1	18.1	32.4	31.1	52.8	66.6	51.2
Dominican Republic, 1996, Q5	50.0	41.0	35.4	54.5	68.7	60.4

**Source:** Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) database.

**Note:** Q1 = lowest socio-economic quintile; Q5 = highest socio-economic quintile.

Figure IV.13

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: USE OF MODERN CONTRACEPTION AMONG YOUNG WOMEN IN UNIONS BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL AND AGE GROUP, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1995-1998**



Source: Table IV.14.

First, and as was to be expected, the evident disparities between countries is not consistent with the data on fertility by age. Of particular interest is the case of Nicaragua, where more than 50% of young women (aged 20-29) in unions claim to use some form of modern birth control, a higher rate than in Colombia and Peru. Even teenage Nicaraguan girls record higher rates than those in Bolivia, Haiti and Guatemala. A superficial reading of these figures could lead to an interpretation that contradicts some of the results outlined in previous sections, such as those related to low maternity rates among Bolivian and Haitian teenagers compared with the high rates among Nicaraguan adolescents. There is no contradiction, however, since the figures mask very different groups that are exposed to the risk of pregnancy, and show that it is impossible to control for the pregnancy/contraception temporality using the available data. As regards exposure to risk, the argument is supported by the data in figure IV.8. The overwhelming majority of teenage Bolivian girls describe their marital status as "never in a union"; they are therefore unlikely to be engaged in regular sexual activity and thus avoid the risk of pregnancy without birth control. Since the use of modern contraception among women in unions is not widespread, this will only have a minor impact on teenage pregnancy levels. However, most of those few teenagers who form early unions are likely to become pregnant before they are 20. In contrast, 50% of young Nicaraguan women (aged 18-19) claim "not to be in a union", compared to only 30% of 20-24 year olds. In this respect, although a larger percentage—but still under 50%—of young and teenage Nicaraguans use modern contraceptives, the trend towards early union means that those who do not use them will become pregnant at an early age, and this group accounts for a significant percentage of all teenagers and young people. With respect to the issue of temporality, the use of modern birth control methods could be the result of reproductive experience. Contraception was therefore not used to avoid early pregnancy.

Second, there are socio-economic disparities, although these vary according to country. In Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti and Peru, among others, the rate of contraceptive use among poor youths is at least half that of young women from the upper quintile. In extreme cases, such as Guatemala, contraception use among young women in this latter quintile is five times higher than in the lowest quintile. The differences are less marked in Brazil and the Dominican Republic. The situation in the first group of countries reveals a level of inequality that increases the disadvantages faced by poor youths since, as was noted earlier, they have a much earlier sexual and marital triad than young people from more affluent backgrounds. Hence, in order to prevent this from also leading to early reproduction, modern birth control methods should be more readily available, although the opposite is in fact the case.

Third, teenagers, and above all poor young women, are the most vulnerable group. In several countries of the region, only one in four poor teenage girls in unions use modern birth control methods. This accounts for the temporal link between union and pregnancy in these groups. The special needs of teenage girls, and the importance of their reproductive behaviour in their lives, deserve to be examined separately in the following section.

## **F. ADOLESCENT FERTILITY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH**

In the Cairo Conference on Population and Development (United Nations, 1994) the need to focus reproductive health activities on adolescents was central to the discussions. This was reflected in the Action Programme, which stressed those aspects of reproductive health that negatively influence the lives of adolescents, particularly early pregnancy, non-consensual sex and the risk of sexually transmitted disease (STD) and HIV/AIDS. It was proposed that governments take action to promote and protect adolescents' rights to reproductive healthcare by means of appropriate programmes. These recommendations were emphasized in the evaluation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held five years later (ICPD+5); (United Nations, 1999c). This stressed the need to facilitate adolescents' access to "...the highest affordable levels of health, to provide appropriate, concrete, comprehensible and easily accessible services, efficiently to meet their needs in terms of genesial and sexual health, including education, information and advice on genesial health and health promotion strategies. These services should protect adolescents' right to privacy, confidentiality and informed consent, respecting cultural values and religious beliefs, and in line with the relevant international agreements and conventions in force" (United Nations, 1999c).

Concern for the reproductive health of adolescents is rooted in several factors:

- (i) the signs of resistance to the decline in adolescent fertility;
- (ii) the dissimilar reproductive conduct of adolescents from disadvantaged sectors and those from more comfortable socio-economic backgrounds;
- (iii) sociocultural apprehensions about addressing sexuality-related issues, especially in the context of rapid changes in the codes of conduct and the values associated with sexuality and reproduction;
- (iv) social vetoes at the macro and micro levels that hamper adolescents' easy and safe access to reproductive health services and that thereby leave them vulnerable to a variety of risks to their reproductive health;
- (v) the biosocial consequences of the main developments of reproductive conduct (sexual activity, the formation of couples, reproduction) that can have a substantial influence on the lives of adolescents.

Below is a rapid review of the present status of these factors in Latin America and the Caribbean. The aim is to build on the earlier sections, which emphasized analysis of the current state and the prominent trends in the behaviour, health and reproductive rights of Latin American and Caribbean youths.

### **1. Sexuality during adolescence**

DHS information on eight countries of the region (see table IV.15) reveals that most adolescents had not begun their sexual life at the time of the surveys; only in Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua

did sexually experienced adolescent girls represent more than 30% of all girls.<sup>20</sup> Except for Haiti, the proportion of sexually experienced adolescents is higher in rural areas, although urban-rural differences are slight in Brazil and Colombia. Similarly, the proportion of adolescents who have had sexual relations tends to decline with the increase in education levels except in Brazil and Colombia, where girls with high levels of education also record high indices of early sexual experience.

Table IV.15

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SELECTED COUNTRIES: PERCENTAGE OF ADOLESCENTS (15-19) WHO HAVE HAD SEXUAL RELATIONS, BY AREA OF RESIDENCE AND SCHOOLING**

Country	Area of residence			Level of schooling			
	Total	Urban	Rural	Without education	Primary	Secondary	Mid-level and above
Bolivia	19.6	17.0	27.6	60.0	37.9	14.1	9.7
Brazil	32.5	32.2	33.5	58.8	40.4	29.4	41.7
Colombia	29.6	27.7	35.5	59.1	42.8	23.8	25.4
Guatemala	25.0	17.3	31.0	44.8	30.0	8.5	-
Haiti	29.0	33.1	25.2	30.8	29.0	27.7	-
Nicaragua	36.1	31.5	44.3	65.1	48.7	21.6	17.1
Peru	20.2	16.2	32.2	57.4	39.2	15.9	8.5
Dominican Rep.	32.6	28.9	39.6	74.0	40.6	19.8	8.9

Source: Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished.

The data in table IV.15 are simple but very valuable, since they allow a basic and relatively updated estimate to be made of the number of girls who have a solid sexual education and routine access to reproductive health services specializing in adolescents. They also provide a basic profile of this target group. This is essential to the design of programmes that are adapted to the peculiarities of the beneficiaries, which is crucial for the success of such initiatives. Finally, the data nourish the debate on the forces that promote sexual initiation during adolescence. These, as already indicated, concern the confrontation between those "traditional" cultural codes that foster an early sexual initiation/nuptial/reproductive triad, and "modern" cultural codes that promote sexual freedom and expose youths to messages that foster sex unrelated to marriage and reproduction. Although the data support the argument that the earliest sexual initiation tends to occur in traditional contexts, they also evidence the "permissive" effect of modernization, especially in the case of adolescent girls with a high educational level in Brazil.

Although there is a broad conceptual and public debate on trends in sexual initiation —and regrettably the data are inconclusive in this respect (United Nations, 1998)— there does seem to be

<sup>20</sup> This does not imply that 65% of women or more have their first sexual experience after exactly 20 years, since a proportion of girls who are virgins at the time of the survey will have their first sexual experience before they reach 20. Figures in earlier sections of this study show that in almost all the countries of the region, nearly half of young women between 20 and 29 had their first sexual experience in adolescence.

greater consensus that modernization fosters premarital sexual activity and therefore increases the period in which adolescents are exposed to the risk of premarital pregnancy. The link between modernity and pre-marital sexual initiation is explained by the conjunction of several factors, including the trend (analyzed above) towards forming the first union at a later age, the lowering of the age at which girls begin menstruation, and the modernization and globalization process that the region's adolescents are experiencing, which entails a shift to usually more permissive attitudes towards sexuality. The figures thoroughly support this hypothesis. Table IV.16 shows that in most countries the incidence of premarital sexual relations increases among women in legal or common-law unions. Only in Bolivia and Guatemala is the opposite case.

Table IV.16

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF ADOLESCENTS IN UNIONS  
WHO HAVE HAD PREMARITAL SEXUAL RELATIONS, AND ANNUAL  
PERCENTAGE CHANGE**

Country	Year	Have had premarital sexual relations	Annual percentage change
Bolivia	1989	16.5	-2.4
	1998	12.9	
Brazil	1986	9.7	14.2
	1996	23.5	
Colombia	1986	10.3	8.9
	1995	18.5	
Ecuador	1987	7.4	17.0
	1994	16.2	
El Salvador	1985	7.9	12.2
	1998	20.4	
Guatemala	1987	7.1	-1.8
	1995	6.1	
Paraguay	1990	18.4	7.5
	1998	29.5	
Peru	1986	10.5	2.0
	1996	12.6	
Dominican Rep.	1986	5.5	6.1
	1996	8.8	

**Source:** Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

## 2. Sexuality, marriage and procreation among adolescents

Has the growth of premarital sexual activity, mainly in countries like Brazil and Colombia, led to an increase in premarital births? Table IV.17 shows that Colombia is the only country with a clear trend towards a greater number of premarital births or conceptions; for the other countries this indicator remained stable and even declined. Recent surveys show that in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru almost 40% of births or conceptions are pre-marital. This percentage is smaller in Guatemala, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic.

This is due, among other things, to the fact that in Latin America and the Caribbean the gap between the first sexual relationship and the formation of the first union is relatively short (table IV.18 shows that this period varies between slightly more than six months to two years) and, more pertinently, has narrowed in several countries of the region. This is reflected by the figures for the various cohorts in table IV.19.

Table IV.17

### LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF BIRTHS TO ADOLESCENTS (15-19), BY MARITAL STATUS, 1986-1998

Country	Year	Births			Total
		Before marriage	Conceived before and born after marriage	Conceived after marriage	
Bolivia	1989	34.4	15.4	50.2	100.0
	1994	28.5	14.2	57.3	100.0
	1998	26.0	17.8	56.2	100.0
Brazil	1986	13.1	16.6	70.3	100.0
	1996	8.0	22.7	69.3	100.0
Colombia	1986	16.9	12.3	70.8	100.0
	1990	20.0	16.5	63.5	100.0
	1995	20.5	18.5	61.1	100.0
Guatemala	1987	9.5	12.5	78.0	100.0
	1995	12.3	11.0	76.7	100.0
Haiti	1995	4.7	22.2	73.1	100.0
Nicaragua	1998	6.4	4.1	89.5	100.0
Peru	1986	20.3	17.6	62.1	100.0
	1991	18.7	18.7	62.5	100.0
	1996	20.7	16.0	63.3	100.0
Dominican Rep.	1986	5.1	13.9	81.1	100.0
	1991	6.6	9.9	83.5	100.0
	1996	5.3	9.0	85.6	100.0

Source: Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.



Table IV.18

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: AVERAGE PERIOD (YEARS) BETWEEN THE  
FIRST SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP AND THE FIRST UNION, 1995-1998**

Country	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	Total
Bolivia (1998)	1.7	2.1	2.4	2.3	2.6	2.0
Brazil (1996)	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.2	1.5
Colombia (1995)	1.4	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.4
Guatemala (1995)	0.5	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.2	0.7
Haiti (1995)	1.6	1.7	1.8	2.1	1.9	1.6
Nicaragua (1998)	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.6
Peru (1996)	1.5	2.0	2.2	2.4	2.2	1.8
Dominican Rep. (1996)	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.6

**Source:** Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

In the countries under study, two markedly different forms of conduct were apparent with regard to nuptiality and sexuality; these are also related to fertility. The first is chiefly evident in Central American countries, which are at an early stage of their transition and have high rates of adolescent fertility, and where the onset of sexual life and pregnancy are closely related with marriage. This conduct conforms to deeply-rooted cultural patterns and is characterized by a very intense union at an early age, especially in rural areas and among those with low levels of schooling. In these societies a woman aged between 15 and 19 is often not viewed as an adolescent, but as a fully mature person ready for a married and sexual life.

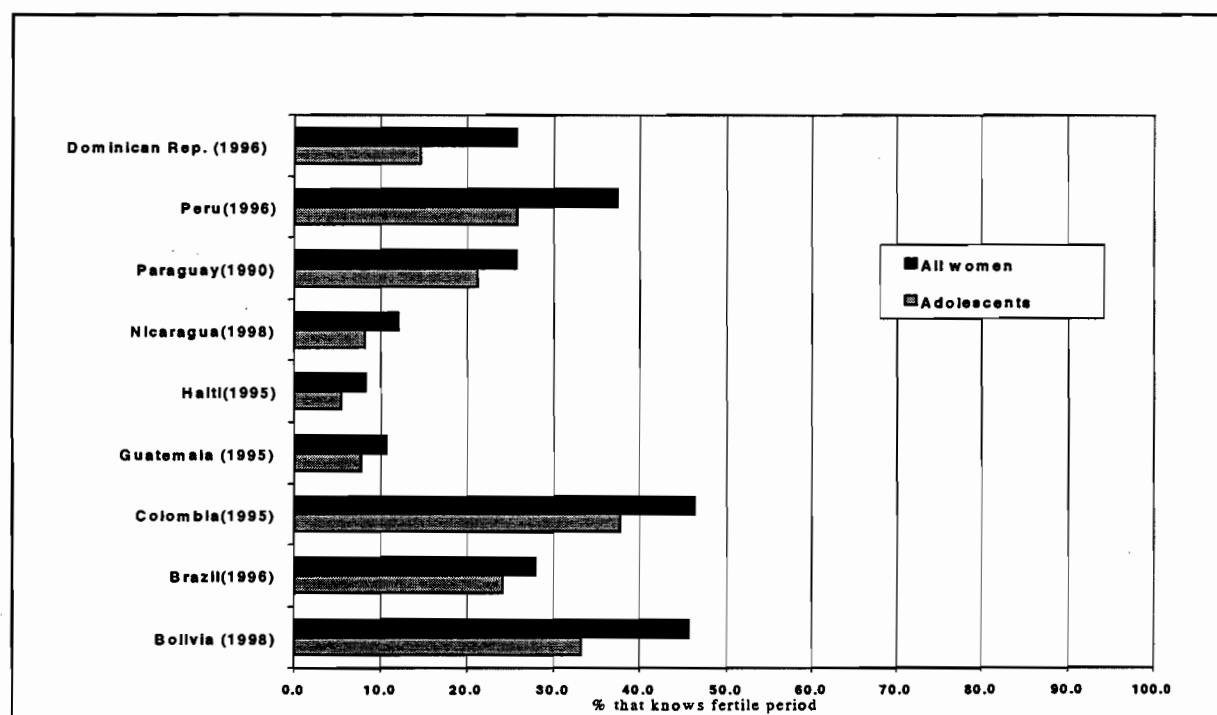
A different and relatively new form of conduct is also evident, characterized by an increase in the age when the first union is formed and a slight decline in the age when the first sexual relationship occurred. An increase in premarital sexual relations is apparent, mainly in adolescents with a higher level of schooling, which seems to be influencing the increase in adolescent fertility in these countries. Here, the union is not as early as in the Central American case, there is more premarital sexual activity, and there is a much higher number of premarital births. Brazil and Colombia were the most representative countries in this respect.

### 3. Adolescents and birth control

The adolescents of the region, especially those from socially disadvantaged sectors, are generally more familiar with modern birth-control methods than other age groups, and general awareness of such methods is high, both among those that are currently with partners and those that are now single, whether or not they are sexually active. Of course, the level of knowledge varies according to the type of method, and in general the pill and female sterilisation are those mentioned most. This high level of knowledge is the result of a long process in which discussion of contraception has been an issue in the media (especially since the 1970s), which in many countries of the region address matters of sex education. For example, this indicator increased from 70% to 87% between 1994 and 1998 in Bolivia, from 80% to 93% between 1986 and 1996 in Peru, and from 58% to 68% between 1987 and 1995 in Guatemala.

Familiarity with contraception, however, is not reflected in other key aspects of female reproduction. This is evident from figure IV.14, which shows the proportion of women who can correctly identify the time of the month in which they can conceive. Bearing in mind not only the levels of awareness analyzed but also the levels of contraceptive use, countries in which surveys have recently been conducted record lower percentages than expected. Apparently, family planning programmes have put greater emphasis on the methods themselves than on the physiology of reproduction. The higher values found, at least in Bolivia and Peru, are congruent with the greater prevalence of periodic abstinence in those countries. While it is clear that adolescent girls are generally less informed than older women, in some cases the values do not differ substantially.

Figure IV.14  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO CORRECTLY IDENTIFY THEIR FERTILE PERIOD, AGED 15-19 AND ALL WOMEN AGED 15-49. SELECTED COUNTRIES



Source: Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

When this indicator is analysed for adolescent women aged 15-19 according to area of residence, educational level and poverty stratum, substantial differences emerge. However, even women with higher levels of education, or those from urban areas, or those from the upper quintiles display limited awareness of the period of fertility. In no group of women does knowledge of the fertile period exceed 80% (see table IV.19).

Table IV.19

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SELECTED COUNTRIES: PERCENTAGE OF ADOLESCENT WOMEN (AGED 15-19) WHO CORRECTLY IDENTIFY THE FERTILE STAGE OF THEIR MENSTRUAL CYCLE, BY AREA OF RESIDENCE, EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND POVERTY QUINTILE**

Country and date of the survey	Total	Area of residence		Level of schooling				Poverty quintiles				
		Urban	Rural	Without education	Primary	Secondary	Mid-level and above	1	2	3	4	5
Bolivia (1998)	33.1	38.5	16.5	3.3	11.3	37.0	67.0	12.0	25.1	33.7	38.0	42.4
Brazil (1996)	24.1	26.9	12.1	..	4.7	30.0	78.3	6.7	16.3	25.2	33.2	38.0
Colombia (1995)	37.7	44.1	18.7	..	11.1	47.7	79.7	13.1	25.8	38.2	47.1	53.5
Guatemala (1995)	7.7	12.3	4.1	1.4	3.0	17.2	37.9	1.6	1.2	4.5	8.8	17.1
Haiti (1995)	5.5	7.9	3.4	3.6	2.5	13.0	..	1.3	0.9	5.0	6.0	9.9
Nicaragua (1998)	8.2	10.1	4.8	2.3	4.0	11.8	24.1	2.4	4.0	8.5	10.8	12.5
Paraguay (1990)	21.2	24.3	18.0	21.4	15.7	28.3	37.5	..	..	..	..	..
Peru (1996)	25.7	28.6	17.3	11.6	9.5	27.6	44.1	12.0	22.0	26.4	29.9	31.8
Dominican Rep. (1996)	14.5	16.7	10.5	7.8	7.7	21.7	63.6	7.9	9.4	13.6	13.3	25.1

**Source:** Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

Table IV.20 shows the prevalence of and differences between countries in the current use of birth-control methods. These values are not directly related to the fertility levels shown earlier, which implies that the variations in fertility between countries is to a large extent determined by the formation of unions. In Haiti, for example, contraceptive use by women in unions is low but fertility is lower than in Brazil, because Haitian women begin their sexual lives and marry later. It should be noted that when the use indicator is calculated for sexually active women who are not married (legally or consensually), contraceptive use is greater, which somewhat undermines the belief that sexually active, single, adolescent women do not take precautions against pregnancy.

As for the methods used by adolescents who are in partnerships, the pill predominates in most countries: Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. However, injection is the leading method in Guatemala and Peru, and the condom in Haiti and Jamaica. Bolivia is the only country where periodic abstinence is the method most commonly used by adolescents in unions.

Table IV.20

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SELECTED COUNTRIES: PERCENTAGE OF  
ADOLESCENT WOMEN THAT CURRENTLY USE A CONTRACEPTIVE.  
TOTAL, IN UNIONS AND SEXUALLY ACTIVE SINGLE**

Country/survey date	Total	In unions	Sexually active single
Belize (1991)	..	26.2	..
Bolivia (1998)	5.1	31.1	63.5
Brazil (1996)	14.8	54.0	65.9
Colombia (1995)	10.9	50.9	67.0
Costa Rica (1990)	2.6	52.0	66.0
Ecuador (1988)	3.0	15.3	..
El Salvador (1994)	..	22.5	..
Guatemala (1995)	2.8	12.1	41.7
Guyana (1992)	..	18.1	..
Haiti (1995)	3.6	10.5	24.3
Honduras (1996)	..	27.6	..
Jamaica (1993)	29.3	58.8	..
Mexico (1996)	7.7	43.5	..
Nicaragua (1998)	11.3	39.9	23.7
Paraguay (1998)	..	47.1	..
Peru (1996)	7.5	46.0	69.8
Dominican Republic (1996)	10.1	35.1	57.7
Suriname (1992)	..	29.6	..
Trinidad and Tobago (1987)	9.7	42.4	42.9
Venezuela (1998)	10.3	59.6	40.0

**Source:** Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

(..) = Unavailable.

## **G. THE EFFECTS OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY: LEAVING SCHOOL AND FORMING FAMILIES**

### **1. Relation between adolescent fertility and early school-leaving. Pregnancy as a cause of leaving school**

Besides its possible health risks, teenage pregnancy can have unfavourable social consequences by interrupting or changing a life plan and forcing the teenage father and (mainly) mother to abandon their education and possibly to seek work to sustain their family. The issue of dropping out of school arouses special interest because of its links with human capital formation and overcoming poverty. In developing countries, however, there has been very little systematic research of the extent to which early pregnancy causes students to leave school.

The early studies on teenage pregnancy in the United States (such as Moore and Waite, 1977) concluded that there is generally a strong causal link between teenage pregnancy and premature school-leaving. More recent studies have found the links to be less strong. This is partly because of more progressive policies towards the presence of pregnant students at school, and to the expansion of special programmes that allow school drop-outs to complete their education by other means. However, it has also been argued that the links initially found were overestimated, since they failed to give due consideration to pre-existing conditions (Hoffman, Foster and Furstenberg, 1993; Hotz, McElroy and Sanders, 1997; Marini, 1984; Moore et al., 1993). Some studies, for example, have compared the educational and work experiences of sisters who did or did not have a child during adolescence but who, in other respects, shared the same social advantages or disadvantages.

On the basis of such comparisons, Hoffman, Foster and Furstenberg found that the average effect of deferring birth from the teenage years to after the age of 20 was just 0.38 years of additional schooling. Hotz, McElroy and Sanders compared teenage mothers with adolescents of the same age who were pregnant but miscarried. Although in both groups just over 50% completed secondary education, the mothers more frequently resorted to special programmes in order to attain an education equivalent to the secondary diploma. Olson and Farkas (1989) who used econometric models, found no causal link between pregnancy and dropping out among poor black secondary school students. Ribar (1994, 1996), using similar techniques, found no effects on adolescents, be they white, black or Hispanic. Moore et al. (1993) found a significant link only in the case of Hispanic teenagers. Upchurch and McCarthy (1990), finally, found that teenage mothers who continue at school are almost as likely as their fellow students to complete their secondary education. Once they drop out, however, the likelihood of completion is just 30%, half the probability of students who dropped out for other reasons.

When figures exist on the relation between teenage pregnancy and school-leaving in the least developed countries, they generally refer to girls who drop out. Senderowitz and Paxman (1985) estimate that each year in Zambia some 2% of primary and secondary students are expelled because of pregnancy. Although these numbers are higher at secondary level, the effect on average female schooling tends to be relatively modest, especially in countries where such schooling is very limited, because many girl pupils dropped out for other reasons. In their study of rural communities in Guatemala, Engle and Smidt (1998) note that in the United States teenage maternity represents a disequilibrium between the tasks demanded by adolescence and motherhood. It is unlikely that this disequilibrium exists in rural Guatemala, where most girls leave school before the onset of menstruation and have their first children before they reach 20.

As in developed countries, there is a link between teenage pregnancy and poor school performance prior to the pregnancy. A study in Kenya, for example, found that drop-out rates for reasons of pregnancy among students in the lowest academic performance quartile were more than double the rate in the highest quartile (Division of Family Health / GTZ Support Unit, 1988). In many of these cases it is possible that the teenager became pregnant deliberately in order to leave school (Dynowski-Smith, 1989). It is thus unreasonable to assume that the adolescent would have continued at school if she had not been pregnant. Lloyd and Mensch (1999), who also address the situation in Kenya, point out that the literature on pregnancy among school students in developing countries implicitly assumes that adolescents who are obliged to leave school because of pregnancy would have continued at school if they had not been pregnant. But there are many other reasons why a teenager might leave school during adolescence. In the case of adolescents who are pregnant, lack of support from the school might increase the chances that they give birth rather than seek an abortion and continue their education. In fact, it might not be pregnancy that prompts teenage girls to drop out, but the lack of social and economic opportunities for adolescents and women and the domestic demands to which they are subject, together with the gender inequalities of the educational system, which can give rise to unsatisfactory experiences at school, poor academic performance, and accepting or opting for early motherhood.

Bledsoe and Cohen (1993) emphasize that the crux of the matter is that the chances of a good education, easily available to the adolescent daughters of affluent families, can act as a disincentive to teenage fertility. Meagre possibilities for securing a good education, by contrast, coupled to other factors, can spur adolescents from poor families to become pregnant. These adolescents often have less chance of keeping up with the academic pace because the demands made on them to help at home leave them little time to study. These teenagers are also less able to afford school materials or to enrol in the expensive private schools that conscientiously oversee their students' comings and goings... It is unsurprising that such teenagers decide that bonding with a man through pregnancy might be more advantageous than continuing their studies.

Besides school drop-out rates, other information on the effects of early puberty on education (available through the DHS) concerns the number of years of study. Prada-Salas (1996), for example, uses 1986 DHS data from Colombia to show that only 32% of rural women and 67% of 20-29 year-old urban women who had their first child before the age of 20 completed 5 or more years of education, as against 49% and 82% of other women, respectively. Table IV.21, which is based on information from some of the most recent DHS in the region, provides a similar comparison. It shows a two- to five-year difference between the educational level of women who were pregnant for the first time when they were under 18, and that of those who became pregnant between the ages of 21 and 29.

Table IV.21

**AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS OF SCHOOLING OF WOMEN AGED 25-34,  
ACCORDING TO THEIR AGE AT THE BIRTH OF THEIR FIRST CHILD**

Country and year	Under 18	18-20	21-29
Bolivia, 1998	5.06	6.42	8.03
Brazil, 1996	4.55	5.7	7.53
Colombia, 1995	5.13	6.57	8.59
Guatemala, 1995	2.16	3.38	5.95
Haiti, 1995	1.63	2.4	3.76
Nicaragua, 1998	4.28	6.46	8.51
Peru, 1996	5.15	6.6	8.97
Dominican Republic, 1996	5.07	7.29	10.23

**Source:** Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

However, it is unlikely that the differences noted by Prada-Salas correspond to those who drop out because of accidental pregnancies, since a woman with less than five years of education is usually no longer at school when she becomes pregnant with her first child; if she is, it is because she began school late or repeated successively.

The third round of the DHS (identified as DHS III in this study) includes a question, directed at women aged 15 and above who are no longer at school, on their reason for leaving. Table IV.22 shows the results for women aged 15 to 24 in some countries of the region.

Table IV.22

**REASON GIVEN FOR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL BY WOMEN NOW AGED 15-24**

Reason	Bolivia	Brazil	Colombia	Guatemala	Nicaragua	Peru	Dominican Republic (1996)
Currently attending	52.5	47.7	40.4	27.0	40.9	44.8	32.6
Became pregnant	3.8	4.9	4.7	0.8	5.4	6.6	3.4
Married or in a union	5.9	6.0	5.1	3.2	10.5	4.3	17.1
To take care of the children	2.1	2.2	1.0	1.9	2.2	2.2	1.9
The family needed help	11.6	2.5	1.2	11.5	1.8	4.4	1.4
Unable to pay for studies	1.7	2.8	16.6	5.6	9.9	10.7	5.1
Needed to earn money	9.1	9.9	6.8	7.8	5.0	9.1	8.3
Graduated, enough study	2.5	2.9	1.6	3.9	0.7	3.4	0.1
Failed exams	0.5	0.8	1.4	1.7	-	0.8	-
Did not want to study	2.9	8.1	15.2	23.6	13.3	5.3	15.7
The school was far away	2.6	6.6	1.8	2.9	3.0	1.1	4.2
Parents opposed to remaining	-	-	0.7	-	-	-	-
Medical reasons	-	1.1	1.2	-	-	-	-
Other reasons	2.5	3.7	2.4	5.2	2.8	6.0	9.3
Don't know /no information	0.5	0.6	-	3.2	1.1	1.2	0.8

**Source:** Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

As shown in table IV.22, economic reasons (the family needed help, unable to pay for studies, needed to earn money) are usually the most important, and are given as the reason for dropping out by 28% of early school leavers in Nicaragua to 47% in Bolivia. The significance of academic factors (graduated, studied enough, failed exams, did not want to study) varies greatly by country and is cited by 12% of drop-outs in Bolivia to 31% in Colombia. The table does not allow a direct assessment of the importance of pregnancy as a reason. The reasons "became pregnant" and "to take care of the children" should be interpreted as the direct consequences of an early pregnancy. However, the answer "married or in a union" does not necessarily mean that there was a pregnancy. A comparison of the date of the first union with the birth of the first child reveals that, in most countries of the region, between 30% and 35% of adolescents who mentioned this reason (married or in a union) had already given birth or were pregnant when they married, with a higher percentage (55%) in Guatemala and smaller percentages in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. Attributing these proportions in each category, it can be said that—in most countries—early pregnancy is responsible for 15%-20% of early school-leaving at all levels.

A calculation has also been made, on the basis of the intensity of and the reasons for dropping out among women currently under 25, of what would have been the increase in average schooling—in years of study completed—if unwanted pregnancies or all pregnancies that prompted them to leave school could have been avoided. The results, shown in table IV.23, are much more modest figures than those in table IV.21. In no country of the region would deferment of all teenage pregnancies until after 20 have increased female schooling by more than a year. The reason for this modest effect is that there are many other factors that can cause adolescents to drop out, especially in the years before early pregnancy becomes a real threat.



Table IV.23

**AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS OF SCHOOLING LOST PER WOMAN BECAUSE OF DROPPING OUT, AND DROP-OUT RATE AT ALL LEVELS ATTRIBUTABLE TO PREGNANCY**

Country and year	Years of schooling lost because of		Drop-out rate attributable to	
	Unwanted pregnancies	All pregnancies	Unwanted pregnancies	All pregnancies
Bolivia, 1998	0.5	0.9	9.8	17.2
Brazil, 1996	0.4	0.7	10.6	17.5
Colombia, 1995	0.3	0.5	8.1	12.3
Guatemala, 1995	0.2	0.3	3.3	5.7
Nicaragua, 1998	0.3	0.7	7.3	16.1
Peru, 1996	0.4	0.7	11.4	18.9
Dominican Republic, 1996	0.4	0.8	9.4	17.0

**Source:** Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

The average number of years of education lost in table IV.23 should be considered as an upper limit. The data do not take into account the fact that some drop-outs return to school or complete their education by other means. Additionally, the calculation of table IV.24 implicitly assumes that the various reasons for dropping out are statistically independent. In other words, a teenage girl who avoids pregnancy is as likely as her fellow pupils to drop out of school for other reasons. In fact, adolescents who become pregnant might also leave school for other reasons. This is apparent, for example, when the population is divided by poverty quintile, which makes the sectors more homogeneous and makes the assumption of independence more realistic. The results for Brazil and Nicaragua are given in table IV.25.

Table IV.24

**BRAZIL AND NICARAGUA: AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS OF SCHOOLING LOST  
PER WOMAN BECAUSE OF DROPPING OUT, AND DROP-OUT RATE AT ALL  
LEVELS ATTRIBUTABLE TO PREGNANCY, BY POVERTY QUINTILES**

Country and % of poverty	Years of schooling lost because of		Drop-out rate attributable to	
	Unwanted pregnancies	All pregnancies	Unwanted pregnancies	All pregnancies
Brazil, 1996	0.4	0.7	10.6	17.5
Poorest 20%	0.3	0.5	9.5	16.2
Next 20%	0.4	0.7	11.6	19.4
Next 20%	0.3	0.5	10.3	16.3
Next 20%	0.3	0.6	11.3	19.3
Richest 20%	0.3	0.5	10.0	15.7
Nicaragua, 1998	0.3	0.7	7.3	16.1
Poorest 20%	0.1	0.2	3.4	7.9
Next 20%	0.2	0.5	6.2	11.8
Next 20%	0.5	1.0	14.6	22.7
Next 20%	0.2	0.7	8.6	21.8
Richest 20%	0.3	0.7	10.1	19.8

Source: Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

This table also shows that the effects are more modest in the poorest and richest strata: in the richest stratum this is because teenage pregnancy is less common, and in the poorest stratum it is because relatively few women reach the level of schooling at which pregnancy can be a reason for dropping out of school.

## 2. Other social effects of teenage pregnancy: the family

The trend in developed countries is that, increasingly, the man with whom an adolescent girl begins sexual activity is not the man with whom she forms a family... if she forms a family. In the United States, there is substantial concern about sexual relationships between teenage girls and considerably older men, which has led to the enactment of special legislation. It has been shown, however, that only 8% of births to 15-19 year-olds are the result of relationships between 15-17 year-old girls and men who were at least 5 years older (Lindbergh et al., 1997). Even so, non-consensual and unwanted sex is a serious problem when it occurs, and is particularly common among younger adolescents (Moore et al., 1998). In some countries of Latin America and the Caribbean there are more substantial differences. Research on teenagers in Jamaica in 1983 (Morris et al., 1995), for example, revealed that 28% of women who became sexually active before the age of 18 did so with a partner who was 6 or more years older. However, it should be kept in mind that the percentage was also high (30.2%) among women who began sexual

activity between the ages of 18 and 24, and substantial (7.5%) among men who began sexual activity before they reached 18. In the 1993 survey of Costa Rica, Achío et al. (1994) found an average age difference of 4.9 years from the partner among 15-24 year-old women who had had premarital sexual relations in the first relationship. More than a third of women who began sexual activity before they were 20 did so with partners at least 5 years older than them.

Analysing the later marital unions, Bennett, Bloom and Miller (1995) and more recently Lichter and Graefe (1999), looked at the marital histories of American women who did or did not have a child when they were single. Lichter and Graefe found that having been a single mother had a significant effect that could not be explained by prior factors. However, this effect was not necessarily stronger for teenage single mothers. Rather, they found that the percentage of teenage single mothers who had married at some time before they were 40 (73.0%) was slightly higher than the total percentage of single mothers who at some point married (71.7%), but substantially lower than the percentage of women who had never been single mothers (88.3%). More specifically, they found that there was a 16.3% probability that a single woman who had a child at 15 would not marry before 35, compared with a 13.1% probability for women who were not single mothers. However, a 19 year-old single mother had a 28.7% probability of not marrying before 35, compared with 18.0% for single women who were childless at 19. In other words, the probability that a 19 year-old single, childless woman will not marry is greater than that of a 15 year-old single mother. The future probabilities of marriage are determined less by the age when the first child is born than by single motherhood.

Prada-Salas (1996) presents data on Colombia that reveal a greater propensity for unions to break up among women that married or formed unions for the first time before they were 20. For example, among 30-39 year-old urban women who formed unions before they reached 20, 33% of the unions had already been dissolved, compared to 19% for other urban women of the same age group; in the countryside, the figures were 26% and 15%, respectively. The data do not distinguish between women who formed unions because of a prior pregnancy and those who became pregnant after marriage. Such comparisons can be affected by the fact that the unions of women who established partnerships before they were 20 are older, and are thus more likely to have broken up. The author indicates that she controlled this effect, but a more transparent approach would be to make the comparison in terms of the duration of the union rather than of the woman's current age.

This is precisely what Goldman (1981) did in a comparative study of the break-up of unions in Colombia, Panama and Peru. The author also distinguished between formal and consensual unions. He concludes that the probability that the first union will break up after 10 years in Panama and Peru is slightly greater for women who married before the age of 20, with a more significant difference in Colombia. However, consensual unions are highly unstable in all cases, independently of the age of the woman when she forms the union. As consensual unions are more common among the poor, rural population, this might mean that the marital instability attendant on very early unions is more characteristic of the middle and upper urban sectors. On the other hand, Buvinic (1998) analyzed data on Barbados, Chile, Guatemala and Mexico, and found no greater propensity to marital instability in terms of the women's' current situation (independently of whether they were teenage mothers).

Table IV.25

**COLOMBIA AND NICARAGUA: WOMEN WHO HAD THEIR FIRST CHILD  
7-13 YEARS AGO, BY THEIR AGE WHEN THE CHILD WAS BORN,  
MARITAL STATUS AT THE TIME AND CURRENT MARITAL STATUS  
(Percentages)**

Marital status when the first child was born and currently	Colombia (%)			Nicaragua (%)		
	< 18	18-20	21-29	< 18	18-20	21-29
In a union before pregnancy						
- In first union	54	65	79	51	55	65
- Widow /div. / sep. <sup>a</sup> / from first union	12	9	8	7	8	12
- In second, third or more unions	31	20	10	32	27	16
- Widow /div. / sep. second, third, etc. time	4	6	3	8	10	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
In a union during pregnancy						
- In first union	63	66	84	53	61	74
- Widow /div. / sep. <sup>a</sup> / from first union	9	15	11	8	10	12
- In second, third or more unions	21	18	4	34	19	11
- Widow /div. / sep. second, third, etc. time	6	1	1	5	8	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Not in a union when first child was born						
- Never in a union	20	15	27	3	2	11
- In first union	54	64	64	53	76	56
- Widow /div. / sep. <sup>a</sup> / from first union	15	12	5	8	10	11
- In second, third or more unions	9	9	4	32	12	11
- Widow /div. / sep. second, third, etc. time	2	1	-	4	-	11
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Guzmán, Hakkert and Contreras, "Salud reproductiva de los adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe", Mexico City, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support team, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, unpublished, 2000.

<sup>a</sup> Divorced /separated.

Table IV.25 provides information from the most recent DHS in Colombia (1995) and Nicaragua (1998). This enables an assessment to be made of the influence of the mother's age when she had her first child, and of her marital status at that time, on her marital status approximately ten years (7-13 years) later. It shows that women who had children at an early age are less likely still to be in their first union

after 10 years. Coinciding with Buvinic, it suggests that this higher degree of instability in unions does not generally cause the teenage mother to live alone; rather, teenage mothers who married or formed unions before or during pregnancy display a higher incidence of multiple unions. However, the table also reveals another important fact: as in the United States, a single mother is more likely to marry or form a union if she had her children when she was a teenager rather than later.

As regards the quality of the emotional life of women and the problems of bringing up their children, Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn and Morgan (1987), among others, have shown that teenage mothers disproportionately suffer divorce and other marital dysfunctions, and have more extra-marital births. In conjunction with the above, this suggests that teenage mothers spend a higher proportion of years alone, taking care of their small children. In the United States, when the children of teenage mothers reach adolescence they record higher rates of school repetition, delinquency, imprisonment and early sexual activity than the children of adult women (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn and Morgan, 1987; Grogger, 1997; Moore, 1986; Moore, Morrison and Greene, 1997). The children of teenage mothers also record higher rates of abuse and negligence than the children of older women. Haveman, Wolfe and Peterson (1995, 1997) have looked at the probability that the children complete high school, that a daughter becomes pregnant in adolescence, and that she is single mother. Controlling a series of prior conditions, they concluded that the children of girls who became mothers before the age of 15 (instead of deferring birth until after 20) were less likely to complete secondary education (from 81.9% to 71.0%). The probability that a daughter would give birth before 18 increased from 14% to 18.5% if she had been born when her mother was under 15. A study of Baltimore (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn and Morgan, 1987) and the longitudinal study of Horwitz et al. (1991) found that a third and a quarter, respectively, of the daughters of teenage mothers became teenage mothers in their turn.

The authors note that, despite the link, the daughters' socio-economic conditions and poverty are more significant determinants of their behaviour in adolescence than their mothers' age when they were born (Brooks-Gunn and Furstenberg, 1986). Many of the negative effects of teenage motherhood on children depend on the presence or absence of the father or a stepfather in the family (Furstenberg and Harris, 1993). In their bibliographical review, Levine Coley and Chase-Lansdale (1999) found that several of the studies on the effects of teenage motherhood on the children's generation need more rigorous controls to separate the effects of early motherhood from effects stemming from pre-existing conditions. For example, Geronimus, Korenman and Hillemeier (1994) compared the socio-emotional and cognitive development of teenage mothers' children with the children of their cousins who were not teenage mothers; they found no significant differences.

All studies on the intergenerational effects mentioned above were conducted in the United States with white or Afro-American women. Doubt has been cast on the validity of their results for the Hispanic population of the United States and for groups from Latin America. Engle and Smidt (1998) argue that, because of the different sociocultural context, many of the negative consequences of teenage pregnancy that are transmitted to the next generation are not apparent in these groups. For example, Erickson, Lundgen and Monroy de Velasco (1991) found, among three groups of low-income pregnant teenagers (residents of Mexico City, Mexican women resident in the United States who were little assimilated, and Mexican women who were highly assimilated in the United States) that the assimilated women had the highest proportion of single women who had no relationship with the baby's father at the time of birth (47%), compared with the less assimilated immigrant group (36%) and the Mexican group (26%). Other researchers (Aneshensel, Becerra and Becerra, 1989; Atkin and Alatorre, 1991; Moss, Iris and Mendoza, 1991) also indicate that Mexican society and Mexican communities in the United States are characterized by cultural patterns that offset many of the negative trends pointed out by Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn and Morgan (1987) and others, who based their analyses on the white or Afro-American population of the

United States. In their own research on poor rural women in Guatemala, Engle and Smidt showed that there was no link between age at the time of the first birth and the likelihood of being a single mother, and even that boys who lived with single mothers during childhood gained higher marks in cognitive, reading and vocabulary tests compared to teenagers whose parents were together. These differences persisted when controlled by indicators of socio-economic circumstances, housing quality and the mother's level of schooling.

## V. YOUTH AND PUBLIC POLICIES

Once the social and demographic characteristics of Latin American and Caribbean youth have been described, including their living conditions and trends in reproductive health, and some of the problems they face have been identified, the next step is to consider the role of public policies in this area. The present chapter begins with an overview of the principal intervention models that have prevailed in the last fifty years, followed by a brief evaluation of the achievements and limitations of the initiatives that have been taken. An attempt is then made to tie youth policies into the overall picture of State reform. In conclusion, attention is turned on some of the substantive priorities that will need to be addressed in the immediate future.

### A. THE EVOLUTION OF YOUTH POLICIES

Policies on youth have followed a unique course of evolution in the region, drawing elements from four hypothetical models, none of which exists or has been applied in its pure form; rather, these models have coexisted, overlapped, and even competed with one another at various times in history. Nevertheless, characterizing them in ideal terms gives a clearer picture of the main components of the youth policies that have been introduced in the region up to now. One could go back to more remote antecedents—for example, tracing youth policies back to the industrial revolution—but since it is only recently that “youth” has been recognized as a social category in and of itself, what is important here is to capture the trends of the last fifty years in the context of the modernization and productive transformation process experienced by the region as a whole (Rodríguez, 1996; Bango (coord.), 1996a).

#### 1. Education and free time for socially integrated youth

One model of public policy, whose basic characteristics were felt during the three decades of overall sustained economic growth (from 1950 to 1980), focused on two particularly important conditions in the life of young people—namely, education and free time. The progress that has been made is obvious, especially for the broad sectors of youth who have gained access to the benefits of education, above all at the basic level, and more recently at the secondary and higher levels. Whereas at the start of the 1950s the proportion of the population that had had primary schooling was around 48%, by the end of the 1990s the figure had reached 98%. During that same period, gross rates for secondary schooling increased from 36% to almost 60%, while those for higher education went from 6% to 30%.

It is safe to say that primary education is now universal; that, on average, half the youth population have the benefits of secondary education, and that one-fifth have some form of higher education. From the perspective of youth policies, investment in education has been one of the States' primary responses which has historically led to the social incorporation of new generations. This response, which at the same time stimulated a growing demand on the part of the parents, especially in the rising middle classes, has led to encouraging results, at least in terms of numbers. However, as time passed, the opportunities that education offered for upward social mobility began to taper off. To begin with, investments in infrastructure, equipment, and teacher training could not keep pace with the sudden demand for mass public education coverage, leading to a decline in quality. As a reaction to this decline, large numbers from the middle and upper sectors deserted the public systems and enrolled their children in private schools, creating a new trend toward segmentation.

Meanwhile, along with the expansion of the educational system, governments sought to offer more and better opportunities for utilization of young people's "free time". These initiatives were intended, either explicitly or implicitly, to steer them away from such behaviours as drug abuse, excessive drinking, irresponsible sexual activity, and other types of antisocial behaviours which not only threatened their own well-being but could also impact negatively on the health of the overall social fabric. In this vein, steps were taken to develop sports, recreational, and cultural activities designed to put young people's free time to constructive use. Parallel to these initiatives, adolescent health services were established which emphasized risk prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles as well as the treatment of disease. Adequate attention to the physical and mental health of young people became a clear priority for public policies aimed at youth.

Numerous examples can be cited in almost all the countries of the region, but what stands out is that the essence of this model of youth policies, intended to be valid for all youth, turned out to be effective only for those young people who were already integrated into society in general and the education system in particular. Large numbers of excluded youth who were not reached by the measures offered under this model were made the subject of actions under the heading of social control, since poverty was almost automatically equated with delinquency. Even so, this model based on education and the utilization of free time had a visible influence on the orientation of priorities regarding youth in the States of the region: via the education route, large numbers of youth moved upward and were gradually incorporated into society. In summary, even though restricted in scope, the model has yielded (and continues to yield) enormous benefits for the new generations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

## 2. Social control of mobilized youth

With the increasing incorporation of youth into the educational system, especially at the secondary and higher levels, large numbers of youth began to mobilize and form organizations based on their status as students. At the root of this mobilization is a historic confluence of several phenomena: changes in the social profile of the university student body, coupled with a significant growth in enrolment during these years; the first signs of erosion of the import substitution model and the consequent loss of opportunities for upward mobility via the labour market; as part of the Cold War, the existence of two antagonistic concepts regarding the development of societies; and the resonance of the Cuban revolution throughout the region. In this context, youth mobilization quickly assumed strongly confrontational characteristics, both in open defiance of the established political and social system, and in response to the troubling state of Latin American societies at the end of the 1970s.

The mobilization of Latin America's youth was influenced by events in all parts of the world, such as the events of May 1968 in France, and their links to some of the popular movements gradually became strengthened —especially movements instigated by the labour unions, which in almost all the countries of the region had been growing under the umbrella of substitutive industrialization. To a lesser extent, agreements were also made with *campesino* movements, which basically amounted to supporting their vocal demands for access to land.

As the university student organizations grew, they play a role in the formation of left-wing political groups and even guerrilla movements, which reached their peak in the 1970s under the influence of the Cuban revolution. Within the picture of strong polarization throughout the world, these processes, as well as the reactions of the dominant sectors, were not difficult to understand. In the wake of these events, variants of the youth policy model described above began to take shape. The specific aspects of



these variants, recognized by some authors as signs of the development of a new model, could be traced to the functions of social control traditionally assigned to the ministries of interior. However, in light of the eminently youth-based nature of these confrontational demonstrations, it was maintained that the work of these agencies should be backed up by other institutions that were more directly involved in youth issues. The strategy, which consisted in isolating the student movements and restricting them to the university campuses, turned out to be successful from the standpoint of those who were in favour of control, since in most cases it succeeded in limiting their expansion to other areas of society and prevented the student initiatives from linking up with urban popular youth movements.

Another notable aspect of the student movement was its eminently autonomous nature —that is, the fact that its impetus came from within the world of young people. This characteristic was not a factor in the model that focused on education and the utilization of free time. The older model was a response to youth on the part of the State, rather than an initiative originating with the youth themselves. This autonomy largely accounts for the rapid and extended politicization of the student movements, which showed their capacity to ally themselves with other social organizations, including non-youth organizations, and it also explains the limited capacity of the student movements to give serious weight to the other youth organizations, such as the urban popular youth, with which they never developed intragenerational relations.

### 3. Addressing poverty and preventing crime

The growth of student and labour movements, along with the development of left-wing political parties and the emergence of guerrilla movements of many kinds, was in large measure a reaction to the installation of military governments in most of the countries that had attempted populist experiments. This situation coincided with the onset of the economic and social recession and the rise in poverty in the 1980s. The democratic governments that began to appear by mid-decade throughout the region, especially in South America, inherited a heavy burden which obliged them to shore up their nascent political regimes and implement economic adjustment programmes which were highly unpopular but deemed to be necessary in order to address the problem of foreign debt and restore order to the national economies. In Central America the adjustment coincided with the most intense phase of the civil war based on the polarization of east and west.

New student movements emerged within this framework, this time instigated by youth from marginal urban populations in the major cities of the hemisphere, most of them excluded from education and society in general. Specialists began to be concerned about the popular urban youth movements and youth gangs which, under names such as *chavos*, *bandas*, *maras*, etc., began to emerge in highly diverse contexts. At the same time, as a reaction to the widespread poverty, new social phenomena began to emerge, which by the end of the 1980s had reached the stage of nationwide rioting and the pillaging of supermarkets. Although the events that occurred in Caracas in early 1989 were the most well publicized, similar reactions took place in Argentine and Brazilian cities, to cite two other examples. The involvement of youth instigators was evident in all these cases.

As a temporary palliative for the acute social problems triggered by the structural adjustment measures, various programmes were implemented to combat poverty, based on the direct transfer of resources to the most impoverished sectors in the form of such initiatives as food aid programmes, health care, and the creation of temporary jobs. For this purpose, emergency funds were established outside the ministerial structure. Although none of these initiatives was ever labelled a youth programme as such, in

almost all the countries the majority of the beneficiaries were young people, and thousands of them took advantage of the emergency employment programmes (Wurgaft, 1988).

These programmes were frankly intended to curb delinquent behaviour, since the relaxation of repressive social controls after the fall of the military regimes in a number of countries, coupled with the representational crisis in the social institutions, had left an enormous vacuum. However, their success was thwarted both by the vast dimensions of the crisis and by the tension between the situational nature of these programmes and the persistence of economic restrictions. This tension, however, seems to have influenced the reinstallation of these programmes, this time with strategies that were more comprehensive and more stable over time, and with measures that were more clearly focused on the growing problems of safety that were affecting most of the large cities in the region. The same impetus is behind the recent *public safety programmes*, which include strategies specifically aimed at the youth population.

#### **4. Formation of human capital and incorporation of youth into the work force**

A fourth model of youth policies seems to have started to operate in the early 1990s. Unlike the previous models, which regarded youth merely as the targets of policies and public service, this one saw them as strategic actors in the development process. Supported by concepts related to the importance of human capital and structured operationally around the incorporation of youth into the work force, the new model comes forward with a new perspective, unlike any of the others before it.

Germán Rama considers that these new orientations stem from the fact that a society, faced with the everyday challenge of its biological renewal, must devise and implement adequate procedures for biologically protecting its own reproduction and ensuring the adequate socialization of its new generations, so that the latter can assume, now and in the future, the social roles, behaviours, knowledge, and values that are appropriate for the continuation of that society over time. Viewed from this perspective, the treatment of youth is a crucial dimension in society's survival and development. Indeed, the future development of today's national societies depends on being able to safeguard the biological heritage of the new generations, on socializing youth in the basic values that define their existence as societies; on teaching them the culture and knowledge that are appropriate to the level of development of those countries that are on the leading edge of scientific and technological transformation, on establishing conditions of equal access to material and cultural benefits in order to preserve the social bases of democracy, on preventing the loss of future human resources through adequate education and training for all, and on endowing those who are going to be its citizens with the capacity and responsibility to exercise their sovereign rights.

Rama also emphasized that in a constantly changing world, youth now has a more important role than it did in the past. Society no longer has to merely ensure its collective reproduction. It is now faced with the problem of having individuals who are capable of *learning to learn* throughout their lives. The plasticity of young people, which enables them to constantly learn and adapt to new forms of social organization with the naturalness of the initiated, has become a form of capital that is as valuable for transformation as economic capital itself. The capacity of our societies to prepare their youth for a changing world, and the ability to appeal to them and get them involved in activities that require modern techniques and procedures, will depend on these societies' adaptability not only in the immediate stage, seen as a period of stabilization following a climb, regardless of whether the particular society is considered "modern" or "post-modern", but also on a social modality that will certainly hold sway throughout the twenty-first century, which will be defined by a constant infusion of science and

technology into society's agenda and by constant changes in people's ways of feeling, thinking, and doing (Rama, 1992).

Based on considerations of this kind, the last decade saw concurrence reached on the central role of education in the development processes, as well as high priority attached to the incorporation of young people into the work force, not only because of the criterion of strict justice toward the group that has the highest rates of unemployment and underemployment in the countries of the region, but also because of the importance that this incorporation has for the development process itself. The job skills training programme "Chile Joven" [Young Chile], launched in 1990, was the pioneer in this regard, and it is being replicated, with appropriate adaptations, in other countries. Generally, it consists of measures designed to provide training over relatively brief periods of time using innovative modalities of operation, focusing concerns not merely on technical qualification but, more importantly, on the relevance of the trades or skills that are selected and on the effective incorporation of the young people into the work force. These programmes are carried out under the auspices of various public and private agencies within a framework of competitive rules of the game. The governments participate in the design, supervision, and evaluation phases, separate from the actual implementation. It is evident that the effort is to incorporate youth into the mainstream of social modernization and productive transformation which are required in order for societies to take their place on the international stage.

## **B. ACHIEVEMENTS AND SHORTCOMINGS ALONG THE WAY**

What is the balance sheet for the experience up to now? Evaluations carried out in recent years have revealed both achievements and shortcomings. These will be examined briefly before moving on to alternative proposals. A short synthesis will be given of the principal lessons learned under the separate headings of programmatic aspects, institutional aspects, resources invested, and social perceptions.

### **1. Programmatic evaluation: haphazard and unstable progress**

From the programmatic standpoint, substantial progress can be seen in a number of specific areas. However, since this progress has not been adequately articulated, or maintained for a long enough time, its effective repercussions on the targeted population —namely, young people— have been meagre and inconsistent. As might be expected, the privileged areas are education, jobs, health, and recreation. In contrast, very little progress has been made in the areas of youth citizen participation or the prevention of violence among youth, aspects that are now beginning to be addressed more seriously.

In the area of education, the main achievement has been the increased coverage of the targeted population, especially females, whose current levels of schooling equal or surpass those of males in most countries of the region (UNDP, 1998a). These improvements have been made largely thanks to a major increase in investments in education. Indeed, between 1970 and 1997 the average regional public expenditure on education rose from 2.9% to 4.5% of the gross domestic product (GDP). However, progress in terms of social equity and quality of instruction has not been as great, as evidenced by the serious problems of repeated grades, drop-out rates, and deficiencies in basic skills, especially in language and mathematics. A diagnosis by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) identifies five problem areas in education:

- (i) a slowing of the enrolment growth rate;

- (ii) inequality between countries, subnational regions and social groups in terms of education coverage;
- (iii) poor academic performance by children and youth, especially those from low-income and socially deprived homes;
- (iv) concentration of investments in "the rich", as in the case of higher education;
- (v) numerous inefficiencies, which account for the paradox between rising levels of investment, on the one hand, and declining levels of academic performance, on the other—even after allowing for the effects of massification—expressed in the problems cited above: high drop-out rates, attrition, and students functioning below their grade level (UNDP, 1998).

Progress has also been made in preparing young people to take their place in the work force, especially in terms of job-skills training. Several countries in the region offer a wide range of innovative programmes which have entailed sizable investments and the development of elaborate implementation and focalization strategies in order to ensure access by young people from homes with limited resources. The evaluations that have been carried out emphasize the progress achieved under these programmes and point out that focalization has worked well in terms of meeting both social and gender objectives. The young people who have participated in these programmes are enjoying advantages that are beyond the reach of those who have not (the latter were surveyed as a control group in the evaluation studies): they have more facilities for getting into the work force, more stable jobs, more appropriate working conditions, and better social relationships. Moreover, since these programmes are implemented differently in different countries, the variety of experiences has made it possible to learn about each one's potential and also its weaknesses, which will make it possible to improve these efforts in the immediate future (CINTERFOR/OIJ, 1998; Moura Castro and Verdisco, 1999).

In contrast, progress in programmes designed to encourage productive undertakings has been more limited. Although there are no evaluations available, the evidence suggests that there are serious shortcomings in the implementation of several of these programmes, and the more long-standing ones show a lack of articulation between training, funding and technical assistance for management. In addition, the vigorous process of productive reconversion and the recent economic crisis are making conditions difficult for microbusinesses and small- and medium-sized enterprises, difficulties which the corresponding public policies have hardly compensated for. In recent years, measures have been adopted which have tended to overcome the difficulties mentioned, but their effectiveness cannot be evaluated as yet.

With regard to health, major progress has been made in a number of specific areas. For example, there has been considerable success with programmes aimed at preventing and addressing the consumption of legal and illegal drugs in a number of countries. The same can be said of programmes for the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS; indeed, some countries have managed to stabilize and even reduce their incidence and prevalence. Progress has also been made in preventing teen pregnancies, although in this area there is still a long road ahead. Another area in which advances have been made is the prevention of traffic accidents, which have been one of the leading causes of death in young people despite the efforts of public officials (PAHO, 1998a). But perhaps the greatest progress has been made in raising consciousness and influencing decision-makers on the need to give more and attention to the reproductive health of adolescents and youth. Even though much remains to be done in this area, considerable progress has been made through advocacy campaigns

involving youth. Their participation is part of the initiative to prepare them to assume the role of strategic actors in development (Burt, 1998; Rodríguez and others, 1998).

Notable progress has also been made in the area of recreation, culture, and sports, thanks both to specific public policies over the decades, especially the 1950s and the 1960s, and to private efforts, both non-profit and for-profit in the decades thereafter. The mass media have exerted a growing influence in this area. Linked to the lucrative interests of transnational private enterprises, they have discovered a broad and sophisticated consumer market in young people which it behoves them to cater to.

Relatively less effort has been devoted to preventing and dealing with the various expressions of youth violence, preparing youth for citizenship, and fostering their active participation in development. The initiatives undertaken in these areas in recent years have coincided with the implementation of public safety programmes —particularly in Colombia, El Salvador and Uruguay— and with the concern of decision-makers about the real (or supposed) apathy of young people, including their growing disenchantment with most democratic institutions, as reported in available comparative surveys.

## **2. Institutional evaluation: confusion of roles and overlapping efforts**

Although considerable progress has been made in a number of areas, the consolidation of this progress has been haphazard because the design and execution of sectoral policies are rarely coordinated or mutually reinforced. Although in some countries, such as Argentina, Paraguay and Colombia, there has been an effort to systematize existing programmes (Gabinete de Juventud, 1999; Rodríguez, 1999a and 1999b), studies conducted in 20 countries of the region in the mid-1990s by the Ibero-American Youth Organization and the Canadian International Development Research Centre indicate that lack of articulation is a generalized and persistent problem. In institutional terms, this lack of articulation is usually associated with confusion regarding the jurisdiction of the executing agencies versus those responsible for design, supervision, and evaluation. Even though institutional development theories insist on the differentiation of roles and duties between each of the agents involved in any public policy, in the real world there are institutions that try to do everything, which often leads to overlapping efforts at various levels of operation while other matters go unattended. These problems come to light when attempts are made to establish linkages between institutions specialized in different aspects of youth issues —for example: national institutes and ministries or vice ministries of youth, and sectoral ministries or secretariats such as those for health, education, etc. Since many agencies act like monopolies, there tends to be little interest in developing rigorous programmatic designs and appropriate follow-up mechanisms. In these circumstances, it is very difficult for evaluations done *a posteriori* to be sufficiently objective. At the same time, scattered and disjointed efforts make it impossible to create the kind of impact that would result from a concerted operation involving the various institutions. Hence, one of the priorities in the formulation of policies should be more explicit and effective distribution of roles among the participating agents.

The evaluations that have been done also indicate that sectoral programmes are excessively focused on problems and individuals, losing sight of the integrated nature of institutional interventions, which is even more essential whenever there are obvious linkages between different problems —for example, difficulties in the local economy, dysfunctions and limitations in family dynamics, or predisposing risk factors for the development of aberrant behaviour. Thus, the search for more and greater articulation between sectoral programmes, which combine prevention with measures to address existing problems, is another clear priority for the future development of public policies on youth.

The Pan American Health Organization emphasizes the need to overcome these methodological shortcomings in its *Plan of Action for the Development and Health of Adolescents and Youth in the Americas, 1998–2001*. Citing Catalano and Hawkins, this report identifies some of the risk factors that are shared in cases of drug use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school drop-out, and violence: extremely limited economic resources, family conflict, family history of problem behaviour, and difficulties in dealing with family conflict. Moreover, drug use, delinquency, and violence reflect the characteristics of the neighbourhood that provide opportunities for the development of problem behaviour: community laws and regulations that favour criminal activity, the consumption of drugs and the acquisition of firearms, peer groups involved in problem behaviour, parental attitudes that promote problem behaviour, little or no sense of belonging to the community, and social disorganization in general ... In these circumstances, the young people who struggle to develop their identities, skills, and lifestyles have easy access to “problem” social activities and at the same time restricted access to activities that foster their development. The adverse the environment in which the adolescent develops, the greater will be the need for support to enable him or her to survive and prosper in the future (PAHO, 1998a).

If this reasoning is applied to any other area of adolescent and youth development, similar conclusions will be reached: disjointed programmes are not only more inefficient in their use of available resources; they are also more costly. These circumstances justify the need to promote integrated programmes, developed in concert with the actors involved and designed along lines that will emphasize services for youth groups situated in their respective environments.

### **3. Resources invested: lack of focalization and excessive centralization**

If one adds to the analysis of institutional management an evaluation of the investment that has been made toward the fulfilment of public policies on youth in recent decades, it is possible to invoke even more arguments in favour of the need to reformulate what has been done up to now. Although comparative studies are not available for a large number of countries, the evaluations available bear out at least two clear trends:

- (a) investments in youth, in the broad sense, have been significant, but they are still somewhat limited compared with investments in other population groups;
- (b) these investments, unlike the priorities for public policies, have been overwhelmingly concentrated on conventional forms of education. Although the methodologies applied up to now are still considered early approximations and differ considerably one from another, studies carried out in Brazil (Piola and Pereira, 1998), Puerto Rico (Quiles, 1996) and Uruguay (Rodríguez and Vanrell, 1993) illustrate these trends and make it clear that the implicit public policy—that is, the one inherent in budgetary allocations—is the one that really counts, even when it is a far cry from the explicit public policy.

On a more generic plane, the ECLAC *Social Panorama of Latin America* shows, year by year, the trends in general public spending (GPS) and social public spending (SPS) in particular. The figures available for the 1996–1997 biennium eloquently illustrate the differences between countries in terms of SPS, which ranges between US\$ 49 per capita in Nicaragua in the 1996–1997 biennium to US\$ 1 570 per capita in Argentina (ECLAC, 1999b). Moreover, in the decade ending in 1999, the region made significant progress in terms of the amount of public funds being allocated to social sectors, since such allocations rose in 14 out of 17 countries. These increases enabled 12 of the countries to more than regain the ground lost in terms of levels of social expenditure in the 1980s, thus surpassing the spending levels



registered in 1980-1981. It should be noted, however, that “in the last two years of the period (1996-1997), this growth rate has slowed considerably, falling to an average annual rate of 3.3%, or about half the rate recorded for the period 1990-1995 (6.4%)” (*ibid*). Within that context it is important to look at the internal composition of GPS by development area. In that regard, ECLAC has stated that “the expansion of social spending in the region as a whole was fairly evenly divided between, progressive and regressive sectors in terms of its distribution over the socio-economic the total increase (25% and 19%, respectively), while another 41% of the upswing was channelled into the social security system, where spending is regressive. In the medium- and low-expenditure countries, however, the generally more progressive areas (i.e., education and health) accounted for the bulk of the overall increase (61%), while social security represented only 21%. In contrast, in the high-expenditure countries, spending on social security represented almost 50% of the increase” (*ibid*).

In aggregate terms, the trends that have been noted above are relevant for an examination of the redistribution of GPS between different population groups. For example, investments in social security —mainly in countries with intermediate and high levels of social spending— are directed almost completely toward the adult population and that of older persons. The same can also largely be said about investments in health. Only in the case of education are investments significantly concentrated on children and youth. Indeed, it may be said that a regressive trend predominates in the larger investments (social security), whereas a more progressive trend is only seen in some areas of education (mainly primary education) and health (with its emphasis on primary and secondary health care). All these examples illustrate the concentration of resources in the adult population, especially when the outlays made by social security are financed by society as a whole. In other words, in addition to receiving a low proportion of resources because of the way in which social public spending (SPS) is allocated, young people help to finance the population of older adults, thus widening, instead of reducing, the inequalitable gaps between the generations. The foregoing notwithstanding, it should be pointed out that, in a world of increasing uncertainty, the level and stability of pensions offer a form of guaranteed security for many households which benefit from the presence of at least one older member. What is indeed evident is the relative lack of protection provided for young couples and their children, who are in the first stages of the family life cycle, during which there is a disproportionate concentration of poverty.

If, moreover, the evidence should indicate that even the expenditure on education is unequally distributed —with concentration on higher education, which would make it regressive— it may be concluded that the SPS on youth is not being appropriately channelled. The problem is aggravated by the excessive centralization of this expenditure. Accordingly, it is indispensable to adopt measures aimed at decentralizing and more effectively channelling SPS in general and spending on youth in particular. No less urgent is the need to assign a larger portion of resources to policies other than the educational areas, which have priority in the design of public policies but which do not pull sufficient weight in national budgets, as in the case of work force insertion programmes and initiatives to prevent risk-prone behaviours. Some studies indicate that investments in health are more efficient when they are assigned to preventive, rather than curative, programmes. By that same logic, investments in support of prison policies are more efficient when they are used for preventive, rather punitive measures. However, the prevailing trends in the region are exactly the opposite.

#### **4. Perspective of the actors involved: corporate discourse and practices**

This analysis would not be complete if it did not include some comments on the prevailing attitudes of the actors involved in the development and execution of public youth policies. Some of these attitudes are well known, but others are only expressed indirectly and remain subsumed in circles that are limited in

their scope and influence. While it is not possible to examine each of the cases that might be considered, it is at least important to contrast the attitude of some of the corporate structures with that of the youth movements, some of the relevant State institutions, and finally, the parents and the community, which are the central referents in young people's daily life.

The argument to be emphasized here has to do with the reasons for the greater or less attention given to the subject of youth within the framework of corporate societies such as those in the region, assuming, as it was already indicated, that young people, in being guided more by the symbolic than the material dimensions of their lives, do not act corporately in defence of their own interests. Therefore, it is important to analyse the attitudes of the other actors involved in the dynamics of youth public policies. If it is concluded that many of them do not feel motivated to support these policies, the key question is *who* could fulfil that role. This background, in addition to being useful for reflecting on the role of the corresponding actors, may contribute criteria for reformulating the public policies in question.

Not many studies have been done on these subjects, but the ones that do exist tend to support two central arguments: youth movements do not act in corporate terms, and the corporate actors involved are not interested in giving power to youth policies. Some of the studies attribute these attitudes to situational factors and believe that circumstances will change. In other cases, the interpretations are based on more structural arguments and are less optimistic that changes will take place in the future. From this perspective, it is assumed that political parties are only marginally interested in youth issues, since their age group is not a significant variable in electoral purposes. In those countries where youth constitute a small proportion of the voting-age population, this relevance is limited on a strictly quantitative basis. On the other hand, in countries that have a large population of youth, the situation of young people is still not reflected in electoral behaviour and the relevance of the issue is limited in qualitative terms.

Trade unions and chambers of commerce also fail to express great concern for the subject of youth. The former give priority to the needs of workers who are already incorporated into the productive process, while the latter give priority to hiring more experienced adult workers. The same could be said of State institutions, which are more concerned with their own existence than in deliberately incorporating new generations into their operational setting. In a context in which the users who really count are adults, since they are in a position to make a difference in this dynamic process, young people do not have enough voice (in the sense that Hirschman (1977) gives to the term) to make themselves heard. The picture becomes even more troubling when the foregoing situation is aggravated by the structural limitations of the youth movements.

At this point it is important to carry the analysis further and look at still other dimensions. In particular, it is of interest to understand the perspective of some of the actors who do not always express themselves corporately but who are important to the picture. This is the case, for example, of the parents of youth, who almost always follow, with more concern than their children do, the situation in which they are growing and maturing. Parents do not demonstrate in the streets or go on strike, nor do they print messages addressed to the government and the general public like entrepreneurs do, but—for example when they are surveyed in public opinion polls—their points of view come out with great clarity. Parents are also influential in other ways as well, even though they, too, have no voice, which is why their views are not taken into account sufficiently in the education system, in electoral forums, or in setting priorities for public policies.

The role of specialized institutions has more importance in the promotion of youth than with any other public policy, inasmuch as they have to provide the corporate role that is fulfilled by organized target groups in other domains (policies on women, for example). This situation seems paradoxical,



especially in light of the proposals that youth should serve as the engine of productive transformation, social modernization, and democratic affirmation. However, the reality is that the high expectations held out for youth organization and mobilization have usually ended in disappointment. This has been true in various contexts and different historical circumstances. These factors have been taken into account in public policies, since experience has shown that most of the instruments placed at the disposal of youth—information centres, for example—are used more by their parents, who consult them to get guidance and find ways of providing more effective support for their children. In turn, such interventions as are made, and can be made, by teachers in the schools, promoters and leaders of youth movements, priests and pastors, and possibly journalists whose consciousness has been raised in these areas are crucial elements for the development of public youth policies. However, up until now these interventions have been only partially heard, and only in some few concrete cases, and for this reason they pose yet another challenge for the reformulations to be undertaken in the future.

### **C. YOUTH POLICIES AND STATE REFORM**

The arguments outlined above are the basis for the importance and urgency around the need for changes in the functionality of public policies on youth. It is time now to consider some proposals that will make it possible to design and implement these changes. This section addresses the subject from the institutional point of view, and the following section identifies substantive priorities for the first decade of the twenty-first century.

#### **1. Institutional reform as a priority for the coming decade**

Many of the structural reforms carried out in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1990s got their impetus from the Consensus of Washington and were focused mainly on fiscal discipline, the liberalization of trade policy and investments, the deregulation of domestic markets, and the privatization of public enterprises. The World Bank recently concluded that the policy dictates of the Consensus of Washington had overlooked the role that might be played by institutional change in accelerating economic and social development in the region (World Bank, 1998a). In essence, the region's priorities during the debt crisis of the 1980s had focused on the search for economic stability and on dismantling the scaffolding of the protectionist model of development.

It would seem, however, that a new opportunity for change had finally arisen, based on the assumption that the sustainability of economic reforms is governed by institutional reforms. Agencies such as the World Bank are now promoting and giving financial support for second-generation reforms, including reforms of the judicial system, the parliaments and public administration. They are postulating, above all, that transformations should change the system of incentives and constraints that dictate the actions of bureaucrats and politicians (Cunill Grau, 1999). According to the World Bank, the effects of globalization (and the powerful demonstrative effects of the recent financial crises), the reforms that have been accomplished to date, the democratization of the region, and the end of Cold War II have opened up a window of opportunity for sweeping institutional reforms, aimed at profoundly altering the incentives that have guided the conduct of individuals and organizations in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. This evolution has increased the real demand for institutional reforms, and the leaders of the region have explicitly accepted the challenge of responding to the growing demand for institutional reforms, adopting many elements of the reform agenda during the Second Summit of the Americas held in Santiago, Chile, in April 1998. The declaration of the presidents starts out with ambitious goals for education, followed by explicit support for reforms in the financial, judicial, and public sectors. This

Santiago Consensus can serve the same catalytic role for the reform agenda in the coming decade that was served before by the Washington Consensus (World Bank, 1998a).

This framework consolidates concerns relating to the governability itself of democracy (Urzúa and Agüero, 1998), it multiplies the experiences that attempt to implement a management-oriented and less bureaucratic model of public administration (Brezzer Pereyra, 1998; Osborne and Plastrik, 1998; ILPES, 1995; and ECLAC, 1998a) and it undertakes to apply several different instruments in order to achieve the more active participation of civil society in the development process while at the same time attempting to expand the leadership role of the public sector, as opposed to that of the State (Brezzer Pereyra and Cunill Grau (ed.), 1998; Cunill Grau, 1999). Along the first dimension, the priorities envisage the modernization of political parties and the various electoral, representational and other systems of popular participation so that they will incorporate citizens' views to a greater extent, and in better ways, within the dynamics of the democratic affirmation processes in which almost all the countries of the region are currently immersed (Achard and Flores, 1997). Of course, each of these processes faces unique challenges: in the countries with deeply rooted democratic traditions, the greatest concerns are corruption, inequalities, and the effective operation of justice (Strasser, 1999; Jarquin and Carrillo, 1997). In other countries, where construction of the State is still under way, concerns focus on respect for human rights and the legitimate and monopoloid use of force.<sup>21</sup>

Along the second dimension, the intention is to create a new paradigm of public management, characterized by:

- (i) adoption of the principle that the citizen is a client or user, with rights that are more clearly specified and more fully respected;
- (ii) the adoption of a new administrative style in which the executive or public manager is motivated to seek results;
- (iii) the establishment of management contracts that specify the institution's objectives, its mission, and its goals;
- (iv) distinct separations between financing, service delivery, supervision, and execution;
- (v) the creation of markets or quasi-markets that encourage competition between service providers and programmes;
- (vi) the re-engineering of processes, with a view to simplifying them, reducing bureaucracy, and minimizing costs to the citizen;
- (vii) delegation of responsibilities, rights and obligations from the centre of power to the intermediate and lower levels;
- (viii) the introduction of modern methods of assessing impact (on beneficiaries) and performance (of policy operators).

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<sup>21</sup> See "Jóvenes, formación y empleabilidad", *Boletín Interamericano de Formación Profesional* No. 139-140, CINTERFOR-OIT, Montevideo, 1977.

Finally, with regard to the participation of civil society, the mechanisms being implemented focus on two fundamental roles: the delivery of services and the representation of interests. In the area of social policy, the demonopolization of public services is seen as an alternative to privatization ("publicization"). The representation of interests involves the development of mechanisms for the social control of public policies—for example, "citizen power" in Argentina and *veedurías* in Colombia—or even participation in their design itself, such as the experiment with "participatory budgeting" in Porto Alegre.

## **2. The mutually agreed distribution of roles and functions to be performed**

The most accepted of the public policies on youth may be considered to fall within the framework just described. There are two dimensions to take into account: (a) the distribution of roles and functions, and (b) la modernization of management itself. This second dimension will be considered in the next section. The mutually agreed distribution of roles is seen as the principal response to the lack of articulation of institutional efforts. In the view being postulated here, this distribution should include all the actors involved and all the contexts in which public policies on youth apply. The first step is to define the roles and functions of the youth institutes, directorates and ministries and of their counterparts in their internal administrative divisions. At the same time, the roles and functions of the directorates and ministries of other sectors—education, health, employment, etc.—need to be defined as well. Another basic step is to differentiate the levels at which agreement should be reached—for example: the units responsible for determining broad lines of policy, horizontal plans of operation, mechanisms for giving impetus and articulating specific initiatives, sectoral executing agents, and spaces that bring young people together to meet and socialize on a daily basis (Rodríguez, 1999c).

At the central level, the youth institutes, general bureaux, directorates, or ministries devote considerable effort to understanding the problems that affect young people and to systematically following the dynamics of public policies aimed at this population group. They can also perform a decisive role as facilitators of the linkages and tasks shared by various public institutions. In addition, they can provide information and advice to youth on how to integrate smoothly into society. The performance of these tasks requires systematic studies and research and the ongoing assessment of relevant public policies, activities that need to be carried out with the sustained support of formal and informal working networks using fast, up-to-date, flexible, and attractive information tools for and about youth. These specialized central institutional foci can also contribute to human resources development, enabling institutions and groups that work with youth issues to harmonize their approaches and provide tools to their members that will be useful in their professional performance. In light of the concepts already expressed, it does not seem advisable for these institutional focal points to assume an executing role in any substantive area, given their position at the core of the State.

In turn, the provincial, state, or municipal counterparts of the youth institutes, directorates or secretariats should get involved in the execution of programmes and projects, while taking care to ensure that they are not competing with other executing agencies at the same level—for example, avoiding overlapping functions between the directorates of education or health in their subnational administrative divisions—with which they should cooperate as fully as possible. They should also coordinate their activities with the national bodies. How can this intermediate role be defined? One way is to define it in terms of the promotion of youth participation, which requires a strong commitment to the idea that youth are strategic actors in development and not merely the beneficiaries of policies. In another sense, this means opening up spaces for youth intervention in the design and execution of social development programmes. For example, young people can cooperate in many ways in programmes designed to combat poverty, in literacy campaigns, or in preventive efforts aimed at developing health lifestyles and avoiding

teen pregnancy. Through such cooperation they would gain valuable experience for their maturation process. It is also possible to devise mechanisms whereby the various youth groups and movements can voice their criticism, make proposals, and share their points of view on issues in their interest so that, with the necessary support, initiatives that have priority for them will actually materialize. Nevertheless, it is important not to run the risk of going to extremes that might be prejudicial in the long run, such as manipulation by the State or the development of opposing actions. In any case, it is essential to accept that youth movements are quite different from what adults or institutions might want them to be: they are ephemeral, highly changeable in terms of interests and expectations, "undisciplined" (the perspective from outside) and, above all, obstinate when faced with external directives, especially if these are perceived as authoritarian.

The ministries, secretariats and directorates, which are responsible for the execution of sectoral policies in such areas as education, health, and labour, should have technical teams specialized in youth issues that are capable of looking at their activities from the standpoint of the beneficiaries and are open to working with an appropriate modern mentality. How can there be concern about adolescent health if the medical field continues to classify their personnel as either pediatricians or physicians devoted to the health of adults. Whom does a young person consult when he or she is no longer a child but not yet an adult? How is it possible to address the apathy of youth using purely normative concepts? How is it possible to have a comfortable dialogue with young people about their sexuality starting from attitudes that are totally unrelated to theirs? To what logic should the implementation of an employment programme for youth respond?

It is also important to look at an area that is rarely addressed in this type of analysis: the spaces where young people meet and socialize. If there is a place where public policies for youth operate effectively, that should be the space. But operational dynamics are rarely considered. Thus, for example, it often happens that youth centres and clubs are established, but no notice is taken of unrealistic assumptions about their effectiveness, such as how many young people would actually use such centres. Or special personnel categories are created, such as youth promoters, without realizing how authoritarian their actions are despite the lip service given to the participatory approach. Or some form of institutionalized youth participation is promoted, such as youth councils, when there is already a long tradition of youth organizations, or perhaps a history of excessive adult control in programmes of this kind. Studies carried out in Colombia (Marques and Ospina, 1999; González, 1999; Pérez, 1998) show the potential benefits of systematically sharing such experiences, which might be repeated in other contexts.

### **3. Changes in public policy management models**

How can such autonomous efforts be articulated effectively? How is it possible to ensure, from this standpoint, that appropriate results are achieved? What mechanisms will make it possible to avoid the problems that arise when coordinating the actions of different institutions? The answers lie in operational management, deciphering its code and developing alternative mechanisms wherever appropriate. Since management models and forms of organization are not neutral, any change introduced can have an important impact on the results of operational management (Savedoff, 1998; IDB, 1998b; Moore, 1998). One of the keys in this regard is the financing of public policies, together with the processes by which resources are allocated—an area in which it is important to maintain a separation between funding and execution.

The bases for the separation between funding and execution would appear to be categorical: if the persons responsible for financing are also in charge of execution, there are no objective means for discerning whether or not the job is being done well, or whether the strategic and methodological paths chosen are the best. When operations are carried out under monopoloid conditions, it doesn't much matter whether the bill for the work is high or low. There are no incentives for asking oneself, for example, whether the same resources could be used to do more or better work, or using other strategic or methodological options. It is therefore fundamental to separate the two functions and operate on the basis of calls for tender that encourage the widest competition and the most complete transparency. In reality, there is no way of being certain that the path chosen is the only one, or the best possible one, for addressing a particular. It is better, therefore, to convene various actors and invite them to present proposals for solving the problems to be addressed.

Similarly, if, instead of giving funds directly to the institutions (the suppliers of services), the management of resources is placed in the hands of the beneficiaries (the demand), more recourses will be available to prevent programmes from falling prey to the routinization and bureaucratization of the institutions responsible for running them. A theoretical example would be education vouchers. Distributing such vouchers to students would empower them as users: the institutions providing the services would have to make the effort to persuade students to enrol with them rather than somewhere else, or if student were not satisfied with the services they were receiving, they could take their vouchers elsewhere, and the one who loses would be the institution providing the service. In actual practice, however, such a scheme would run up against numerous operational roadblocks and generate some undesired effects. This example has been used to point out that a critical review of the established rules of the game is extremely important.

There is no question that it is essential to separate funding and execution from the functions of evaluation, which should be carried out by a third institutional party. When the financing party does the evaluation as well, it will always have the last word, and the executing party will not be able to act with autonomy or independence. Indeed, such a situation is in fact a monopoly, even when there is a separation between roles and functions. The separation between funding and execution requires working agreements between the institutions involved; neither one of them can act alone. If, for example, financing duties were assigned to youth institutes or ministries, this would strengthen their articulatory role; if special funds were to be created, that would strengthen this type of function even more, especially when working with state or municipal entities. Incentives can be offered to establish youth programmes in different sectoral ministries or secretariats, thus promoting an ongoing dialogue between the agencies involved. A similar approach can be used with the mass media to promote better and more systematic treatment of youth issues, rather than creating official programmes (which few people pay attention to) to do the job, or relying on legislation (which can't be enforced) to deal with possible excesses.

These proposals contain measures that are clearly oriented toward decentralization, but they attempt to go beyond the mechanisms that have been applied up to now, which posed limitations and difficulties (Di Gropello and Cominetti, 1998).<sup>22</sup> Decentralization alone does not always bring higher standards of living for the population at the local level. Indeed, it often serves to heighten territorial inequalities and encourages the development of prejudicial autarchic tendencies. It is therefore much better if decentralization can lead to a true distribution of roles and functions between the central, intermediate and local levels which has been agreed upon in concert. Such an agreed-upon distribution will help to improve management at all levels.

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<sup>22</sup> See also *Descentralización fiscal de América Latina: Nuevos desafíos y agenda de trabajo*, ECLAC-GTZ, Santiago, Chile, 1997.

#### **4. Population groups and the transversality of public policies**

If everything that has been said up to this point fits with the transversal nature that policies on youth share with other specific population groups —children, women, ethnic groups, older adults, migrants, and others— then the modernization of management can have repercussions that are highly relevant for the modernization of public management as a whole, since they will consist of foci of accumulated simultaneous and coordinated working experiences in various specific areas. Policies on youth could help compensate for the limitations of specific sectoral policies, such as those of the education sector, which focus exclusively on teaching (and overlook effective in-service training); those of the employment sector, which concentrate excessively on the head of household (the typical adult male employed in the formal sector of the economy) and leave out women and youth (those who are most affected by unemployment and precarious employment), or those of the health sector, which are overwhelmingly focused on the treatment of disease rather than on prevention and improving the health of the population.

An approach of this kind will lead to more realistic public policies that have the sociodemographic backing that is so necessary in order to ensure that the actions taken are relevant and applicable. Thus, public policies on youth, like those aimed at children and older adults, may follow strategic routes that are similar to those followed by equal opportunity programmes for women, which managed to articulate sectoral programmes —citing facts, while facing great institutional and political resistance. Another example is the social emergency funds, set up in parallel with the government institutions, which learned how to resist the competition of sectoral institutions (and even utilize them in their favour). However, it cannot be overlooked that this experience also includes partial successes and outright failures. It is possible that the modernization of management in public institutions responsible for the design and execution of population policies offers a more adequate, effective and stable operational alternative than that of the social funds (Goodman and others, 1997; Godoy and Rangel, 1997; Glaessner and others, 1995). The ministries of social welfare, social development and planning might be the agencies that should be responsible for these initiatives, since they include institutions that are specialized in population groups. The reinforcement represented by the existence of a clear social authority, as in the case of the vice presidency in Costa Rica, is an even greater step forward.

#### **D. SUBSTANTIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING DECADE**

National youth plans, to the extent that they are usually the outgrowth of complex negotiations between highly diverse actors, have traditionally consisted of a “laundry list” of topics which ends up including everything, without any ranking in terms of importance.. Here a different approach is being proposed, in which priority is given to a few key elements with a view to promoting them as broad goals for the coming years. Of course, the application of these orientations will require, in addition, the formulation of more precise programmes adapted to local circumstances.

What is being proposed, in essence, is to make an impact on the process of youth emancipation, seeking to delay it in the case of those groups that are faced with early emancipation (owing to critical shortages in the original home and the economic demands imposed by the family and social setting) and to accelerate it in the case of those groups for whom the process is manifested as delayed emancipation, since it is recognized that those with the greatest human capital investments tend to postpone their assumption of adult roles. In the first case society loses because the young people fail to accumulate enough human capital to enable them to easily take their place in society; in the second case, society loses



because it fails to benefit from the potential of all the human capital accumulated by young persons who are better prepared to contribute to the development process.

### **1. Education and health as keys to the formation of human capital**

As pointed out in a recent CELADE document, the current economic literature often emphasizes that human resources are central to sustained economic growth and the attainment of social well-being, both because of increasingly higher productivity levels and because of the external factors associated with the improvement of their capabilities. The experience of economies in East Asia, which have been characterized by notable growth in recent decades, bear out the fact that the increased production—and its possibility of being sustained—is based on a growing process of physical capital accumulation and on a major effort in terms of human resources development (Rivadeneira, 1999).

In this context, it has been emphasized from various angles that education and health are the two key factors for the adequate development of human resources. Since the early 1990s, ECLAC has considered that education and knowledge are the central axes for productive transformation with equity (ECLAC/UNESCO, 1992). At the same time, emphasis has been placed on the role of health in guaranteeing adequate standards of living and the utilization of human resources potential (PAHO/ECLAC, 1997). The World Bank has said the same thing in its reports on health and knowledge, as has the IDB, especially in its report on inequality in Latin America (IDB, 1998a).

Given the importance of youth as a qualified human resource for advancing the development process, public policies on youth should place very special emphasis on education and health. The governments of the region have repeatedly reiterated their willingness to work intensively in these areas, and it is necessary to identify the priorities and strategies that will contribute to the development of youth human capital.

Education expands the potential of human beings more fully and provides knowledge, skills, and general abilities that will give impetus to talents. Moreover, it is a key factor in addressing poverty and inequality, as studies of the subject have shown. Education has a favourable impact on health habits, especially in the areas of nutrition and hygiene, and on the principal demographic variables: fertility, mortality, and migration. In particular, the higher education of women has a positive impact on the personal and social development of their children (CELADE/IDB, 1996).

Although priorities differ from one country to another, there are four basic challenges:

- (i) to ensure universal access to elementary and intermediate education;
- (ii) to ensure adequate standards of quality and academic performance and decisively address learning problems and school drop-out rates;
- (iii) to substantially improve equity between the various social groups, seeking to halt or reverse the process of educational segmentation;
- (iv) to extend preschool education to the entire population 3 to 5 years of age, with the dual purpose of compensating for deficiencies in the socialization capacity of children from more modest homes, and facilitating the entry of young mothers into the work force. To achieve these purposes, it will be necessary to undertake an in-depth review of

educational reforms currently under way, modernize management, and involve the actors who are not yet participating actively in these processes —parents, communities, and the students themselves— giving them the voice that they do not now have.

Health is a fundamental factor in ensuring the good physical and mental state of people and helping to improve and maximize their performance in their everyday activities, both at the level of production and in their linkages to society, including the fulfilment of their roles as citizens. Adequate health for women is a key factor, as is appropriate health care for children in the early phases of the life cycle, which sets the stage for their future development. Reproductive health plays a prime role in the fight against poverty and social inequality (ECLAC, 1998c).

Health priorities vary from one country to another, and even within countries, but there are at least three basic challenges:

- (i) adequate and timely sexual and reproductive health care, with priority given to adolescents and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases;
- (ii) timely detection and treatment of the principal risk-prone behaviours, including those related to traffic accidents, the consumption of legal and illegal drugs, and activities associated with various forms of violence;
- (iii) encouragement of health lifestyles, including the promotion of recreational and cultural activities and sports in environments that are conducive to healthy socialization, growth, and the personal and social maturation of those toward whom the programmes are directed.

Although fulfillment of these goals requires that the ministries of education and health take on a leadership role, at the same time the more active and intense participation of all public and private actors should be promoted. This includes community-wide campaigns and initiatives such as “healthy *municipios*” and “educating cities”, while seeking to get young people to intervene decisively in the development of specific programmes and projects.

## **2. Reproductive health as the key to adolescent development**

The presence of satisfactory physical and mental health helps to improve and maximize the performance of people in all aspects of their lives. Consensus on this point can be seen in the various declarations and initiatives of the governments of the region aimed at increasing the coverage of benefits, improving the quality of care, and fostering a culture of prevention. It is common to see health programmes targeted specifically toward certain very basic subgroups of the population which have special characteristics in their physiological constitution or their epidemiological profiles, including such groups as children; women, especially those of reproductive age, and older adults.

Adolescents and youth have very specific health characteristics, and therefore public health programmes or interventions directed toward them would appear to be highly desirable, above all in the case of adolescents, who tend to fall in a “no man’s land”. But what are these specific health characteristics of youth? For one thing, they constitute one of the groups least affected by mortality or prevalent diseases. Indeed, youth would seem to be the healthiest stage of life. However, behind what appears at first sight to be an image of strength, underneath there are at least two sources of health risk



which are particularly powerful during youth. First, there is a set of potentially risky behaviours which are much more prevalent in young people —risks related to the consumption of legal and illegal drugs, violence, and traffic accidents. The reasons why young people have a much greater propensity to use drugs, act violently, or end up as traffic accident victims are complex. Although some authors claim that they are related to the characteristics of youth —their tendency to disregard risk and danger, their lack of experience in conflict resolution, the need to show off special traits to their peers, etc.— in many cases these characteristics go hand-in-hand with others such as exclusion, limited opportunities, and lack of any plans for their lives.

In any case, in addition to sectoral action operating through the educational system and mechanisms for becoming incorporated in the adult world, above all the working world, specific programmes and actions aimed at encouraging health lifestyles are ideal mechanisms for promoting a culture of prevention among young people. These initiatives should involve the active participation of all the actors, and in this sense the combination of interventions aimed at young people in general—for example, those related to their recreational, cultural, and sports activities and to their need for spaces for socialization, growth, and personal and social maturation— would appear to tie in well with those aimed at specific groups of young people. If these latter have a territorial identity, action at the subnational level—or even better, at the municipal level— would appear to be particularly desirable, since it would allow for greater precision and swifter identification of the details and specific characteristics of their reality, which tend to vary significantly from one setting to another. Of course, whatever the type of programme or executing agency, redoubled efforts should be made to involve the young people themselves in the development, implementation and evaluation of activities.

On the other hand, it is the evolution of decisions and events that gives shape to what is referred to in this document as the “reproductive behaviour” of youth, the trajectory of which entails various risks for sexual and reproductive health and for their future plans for life.

An analysis of young people’s reproductive health and behaviour suggests a number of settings in which it is appropriate to deploy public, private, community, and nongovernmental initiatives. These initiatives should take into account the heterogeneity of conditions and threats to young people’s health. In this regard, two forces of differentiation carry considerable weight:

- (i) the linking of biological, psychological, and social maturity to age, which serves as a means of distinguishing between adolescents, on the one hand, and young people who are beyond adolescence, on the other;
- (ii) socio-economic characteristics that make it possible to distinguish between socially disadvantaged young people and those who are socially privileged.

It is important to keep in mind that the reproductive trajectory of youth is a complex lattice of decisions, behaviours, and events, of which fertility —the traditional focus of concern of authorities and researchers— is only one component, albeit an obvious and important one. One broad view of the reproductive trajectory makes it possible to observe the effects, in terms of health and other psychosocial factors, derived from each of its component links. At the same time, this view —whose articulating nuclei are the concepts of behaviour, health, and reproductive rights— opens up a space for interventions aimed at prevention rather than responding to events a posteriori.

Next it might be asked what policy orientations are important in light of the statements and results examined in the chapter on the reproductive health of Latin American and Caribbean youth.

The first line of orientation is, precisely, the redoubling of efforts aimed at understanding and responding to the reproduction-related needs of young people, because in Latin America and the Caribbean the known empirical evidence is unequivocal in showing that a sizable and growing share of biological reproduction is taking place during youth, and that therefore the decisions being made by today's youth will shape the demographic profile of the countries in the region. It is during youth that most people start to experience the series of events that constitute the reproductive trajectory, since it is during this stage of life that they have their first sexual experiences, form their first stable union, and have most of their children. All these events have an enormous influence on how the rest of their life is configured. Young people experience constant tension between their status as their nation's "sustainers" of biological reproduction and the growing pressures imposed by society to extend the time devoted exclusively to the accumulation of knowledge, development of skills, and acquisition of experience. Adolescents, in particular, are subjected to competing forces, though different from those just mentioned. The contradictions come from their increasing exposure to messages that stimulate the exercise of their sexuality separate from procreation, which goes counter to society's taboos that tend to deny the fact that they are sexually active and at the same time prevent their access to reproductive health services. A matter of great concern is that the consequences of these opposing forces may seriously affect adolescents because of the constant risk of pregnancy at that age, especially outside a stable union.

A second line of action refers to society as a whole and stems from the finding that most of the responsibility for the population's biological reproduction in all the countries reviewed falls on young people, who are also the most undervalued segments of the population, while youth from the more advantaged social groups systematically reduce their participation. This division of labour, which certainly responds to individual rationales and social stimuli, also entails a net loss of socialization capacity for the community as a whole. It is therefore desirable to take steps targeted toward the two socio-economic segments of the population to keep this polarization of reproductive weight between them from becoming more pronounced. These measures envisage, on the one hand, reducing the reproductive burden carried by young people from the poorer groups of the population, above all if it is unwanted, and, on the other hand, creating greater compatibility between reproduction and the requirements that young people from the higher socio-economic levels impose on themselves for their insertion in society.

A third line should be directed toward the triad of initiations in a person's life: sexual, nuptial, and reproductive. This calls for a certain degree of analytical flexibility, since the empirical evidence has left it relatively well established that, although they may behave like a syndrome—in other words, the three events are closely interrelated, and therefore they tend to present themselves simultaneously or close together in time—there are also signs that economic and social development and the concomitant cultural changes can lead to fragmentation of the triad, making for temporary but widening gaps between the three basic events.

When the triad operates as a syndrome, this is usually because of traditional standards of behaviour regarding sexual, nuptial, and reproductive initiation—in other words, a tendency to form unions at an early age and, within this framework, to initiate sexual life and soon have the first child. As the present document has pointed out repeatedly, this behaviour pattern leads to the creation of obstacles and burdens for young people just as they are assuming their role in modern society. It therefore seems highly desirable to introduce interventions aimed at changing the standards of behaviour that lead to this situation. What is important in this case is to keep in mind that the hinge which articulates this pattern of behaviour is the early union, and that its postponement means delaying the entire triad. Although the laws

that set the minimum age at which marriage can be contracted are useful, they are not enough for this purpose. It is necessary to introduce additional initiatives aimed in the following three broad directions:

- (i) eliminating any existing social institutions or mechanisms that promote early unions without the consent of the adolescents involved;
- (ii) raising the consciousness of young people about the disadvantages of early unions, especially during adolescence;
- (iii) expanding young people's opportunities and options so that they will have effective alternatives to early unions.

The efforts to modify standards with regard to early unions must be accompanied by programmes aimed at helping couples to minimize the risks to their sexual and reproductive health. But more important, even couples in early unions can exercise their basic reproductive rights—that is, regulate the number of children they have, and when they have them. Obviously, in this scenario public policies should be aimed at seeing that early unions do not imply immediate initiation of the couples' reproductive careers. This concept should be promoted through consciousness-raising programmes and education, which will probably meet with resistance from those sociocultural forces that cultivate the early triad syndrome. Of course, even under these circumstances, and recognizing that the mere fact of forming an early union implies a commitment that is at odds with the demands of modern society, widening the gap between nuptial initiation and reproductive initiation has positive consequences for adolescent and youth couples.

The corollary to these policy orientations is the need for an integrated reproductive health programme that includes sex education and family planning services for adolescent and youth couples. In order for such a programme to be effective, it should be accompanied by consciousness-raising and education aimed at promoting the idea that lengthening the time between the union and the first pregnancy is an acceptable cultural option.

The empirical evidence is undeniable: the early triad is a characteristic of socially disadvantaged groups, and in many countries of the region it is an outstanding component of the "demographic dynamics" of poverty. For this reason, the lines of action sketched above, whether they are intended to delay the triad or to minimize its effects at the levels of sexual and reproductive health, should be focused on low-income population groups—precisely those whose youth tend to have fewer life options and alternatives to "traditional" reproductive behaviour. Moreover, the figures presented in this document show that the poor have the highest levels of unwanted fertility, which is indicative—at least insofar as regulating the number of children is concerned—of a large unmet demand for family planning. This emphasis on socially disadvantaged groups is particularly important for reducing adolescent fertility. The results available show, systematically, that young women who are from poor families, uneducated, or live in rural areas are much more likely to form an early union and become mothers during adolescence than those from families with socio-economic status, who are educated, and who live in urban areas. Thus, most adolescent fertility in the countries of the region is not due to a new, more permissive "sexual culture", but rather to the persistence of the early triad among the poor. Indeed, a recent ECLAC document states "the figures show clearly that the highest indices of teenage fertility, and of sexual initiation and formation of first unions at early ages, are found among the most disadvantaged groups in society. Yet these groups are not characterized by having greater sexual freedom than others; on the contrary, a substantial proportion of the most disadvantaged segments seem to be virtually "destined" to early sexual initiation and union, due to the scarcity of alternative prospects in life. The wider horizons

that education and access to labour market opportunities give young people are fundamental in enabling them to develop plans for their lives that do not include parenthood during their teenage years” (ECLAC, 1998c).

The empirical evidence also suggests that when the triad is not working as a syndrome, this is basically due to two reasons, both of them related to sociocultural changes within the framework of the modernization of societies: first, premarital sexual relations or relations outside a stable union, and second, couples regulating their fertility calendar. Both these trends are lengthening the gap between nuptial and reproductive initiation. This scenario, which appears to be more consistent with young people’s free exercise of reproductive rights and more compatible with the demands of modern society, is giving rise to new challenges in the area of sexual and reproductive health.

Adolescents are a particularly challenging group in this regard, because they are receiving signals that stimulate their sexuality and induce them to become sexually active. When this happens outside the context of marriage, or a stable union that envisages having children, adolescents begin to develop their sexuality under premarital conditions, and this situation gives rise to cultural sanctions which differentiate between those whose sexually active condition is acceptable to society and those for whom it is not. Traditionally, age has been a differentiating factor, and for this reason sexual activity in adolescents has come to be taboo —except when the couple is married, in which case this taboo did not apply. Now, however, the sexual activity of adolescents is going outside the framework that institutionalized their sexually active status, and they have landed in a virtual “no man’s land” where, on the one hand, they are “stimulated” to become sexually active, and on the other, they are denied this condition —and even denied access to contraceptive methods which would at least avoid the risks of unwanted fertility.

Thus there is an urgent need to revise these social taboos and design reproductive health programmes aimed at unwed sexually active adolescents. Comprehensive programmes for adolescents that combine education, consciousness-raising, counselling, and the availability of fertility regulation methods would seem to be most pertinent, even for other age groups. The particular psychosocial circumstances of adolescents call for specialized treatment that takes into account the complex ways in which they exercise their sexuality, as well as the erratic and sometimes rash (by adult standards) decisions they make.

One of the challenges of these programmes —perhaps the most difficult to address— is the need to infuse increasing doses of maturity and responsibility into the decisions made by unwed adolescents with regard to sexuality, union, and reproduction —the last because it has been recognized that education alone is not enough. “Formal education and sex education cannot by themselves guarantee responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour. Teenagers need special programmes that are carefully designed to influence sexual, nuptial and reproductive patterns” (ECLAC, 1998c). It is important, moreover, to ensure that these programmes do not become an additional stimulus for sexual activity on the part of unwed adolescents. Without going into value judgments on this subject —and making it clear that premarital sexual activity during adolescence, if it is engaged in with appropriate precautions, does not necessarily lead to disruptions in young people’s life plans, nor is it incompatible with integration into modern society— it should be added that the psychological and social maturity of adolescents is such that it may leave them more open to adverse emotional consequences or cause them to be more erratic in their preventive behaviour.

### **3. Social integration as the primary substantive priority for the future**

When the subject of human resources development is considered from a broad perspective, it becomes clear that efforts in education and health should be an ongoing task, albeit with specific variations over time. It is therefore indispensable to delineate some of the priorities that are more contingent on the major problems being faced in Latin America and the Caribbean today for which solutions cannot afford to be delayed. It seems clear that the most urgent issues have to do with the abysmal living conditions of more than 200 million people in the region, whose situation has led to numerous studies on poverty (Tokman and O'Donnell, 1999; Cárdenas and Lustig (comp.), 1999). However, recent research has pointed to the inherent limitations of this focus and suggested that there other, deeper problems, such as exclusion and vulnerability (Pizarro, 1999). Undoubtedly these concepts are very close to one another and interrelated, but whereas the notion of poverty refers to people's socio-economic condition as such, the concept of exclusion emphasizes the relationship of the poor to the world around them, and vulnerability, in turn, underscores the changes that take place in the relationship between the resources that individuals and households are able to mobilize, on the one hand, and, on the other, their requirements in order to deal with situations as they arise.

The differences that have been pointed out are highly relevant when it comes to designing and executing public policies aimed at addressing the situations to which the foregoing concepts refer. While it is recognized, of course, that poverty is a problem for the youth population, at the same time the importance of the notions of exclusion and vulnerability should be emphasized again, since they are intimately linked to the youth condition. To the extent that the fundamental problems of young people are exclusion and vulnerability, the solution will have to be found in the attainment of higher levels of social integration, including integration into the work force, access to services, and exercise of their rights.

Before designing intervention strategies directed toward these purposes, it is indispensable to identify the various groups that comprise the category of youth, and to understand the limitations of each. First, it is necessary to differentiate between youth with limited resources who do not study or work, young mothers from broken homes, adolescents of both sexes working under unsatisfactory conditions, and young couples facing problems in setting up their own homes. This knowledge—and the relevant policy orientations in specific areas— should be the number one priority in the immediate future.

The subject of integration into the work force as the key to social integration obliges us to refer again to the process of youth emancipation, which is taking many different forms in the various social strata; these differences should be taken into account in public policies aimed at facilitating this process. Since the emancipation of young people refers to the establishment of new autonomous households, an examination of this subject involves at least two key dimensions: the voluntary regulation of reproduction, and policies on housing. With regard to the first, the objective of the intervention is to break up the perverse logic that causes the burden of society's biological reproduction to fall on its most vulnerable sectors. To this end, education and health play a fundamental role in providing youth with information and orientation that will make it possible to defer child-bearing until later. As for the second, it is crucial to implement housing programmes for young couples, the beneficiaries of which could contribute their labour as partial payment and be allowed to take advantage of longer-term loans.

### **4. Incorporation of youth into the work force as the key to social integration**

The incorporation of youth into the work force is a key factor in overcoming their exclusion and vulnerability. Unemployment and precarious employment are having an acute effect on youth in the

region. Without any income of their own, they are denied access to available services (education, health, housing, etc.) while facing serious difficulties in their everyday life. Given the diverse nature of these problems, different measures are needed, each of them tailored to the particular needs of the respective priority youth groups. Since their problems have heterogeneous causes, specific strategies are needed for each situation.

One of the primary responses should continue to be job-skills training, this time combined with development of young people's first working experiences. This combined approach will address two of the main causes that have been cited for youth unemployment: lack of experience, and lack of training. In the countries that already have large-scale programmes in this area, the challenge will be to hone their operational strategies, correct any shortcomings revealed in the course their experiences to date, and expand their coverage. The countries that do not yet have such a programme, and these are the majority, have the challenge of developing them and putting them into practice.

The essence of this type of programmatic initiative continues to be entirely valid, and the strategies for focusing on the most vulnerable of the youth sectors should continue to be perfected through a decentralized mode of operation (with *municipios* taking a major leadership role). This effort intends to avoid the non-monopoloid risks by securing the cooperation of the broadest possible gamut of public and private training institutions in order to have wide-ranging support for proposals that integrate in-service training and support for integration into the work force, developed on the basis of agreements in the market essentially between training institutions and businesses. This effort should include mechanisms to ensure monitoring and evaluation.

One of the virtues of these programmes is that they make it possible to prepare more youth, and to prepare them to compete better for the jobs that are available—in other words, giving them what they need in order to deal with the flagrant inequalities that exist in access to the labour markets. Since one of the main problems is the corporate attitude of the actors involved—trade unions, business, and the State—the execution of the programmes should be accompanied by systematic ongoing efforts to raise the consciousness of decision-makers, calling attention to the damage caused to economies and society by reluctance to address these issues decisively.

It is necessary to take into account the fact that training does not in itself create jobs, and that it is therefore imperative to undertake initiatives aimed at creating new jobs, especially the independent kind, given the difficulties currently involved in expanding the dependent job market. The solution continues to be to foster small businesses and microenterprises, but this should be done leaving all idealization aside, with a strictly economic approach, subject to the ultimate social or cultural goals. In particular, a distinction should be made between subsistence microenterprises and development microenterprises. The former usually fall within the informal sector of the economy and consist of workers with limited resources and few qualifications, typically family members or neighbours in small localities. The latter, on the other hand, are well integrated into the modern sector of the economy and have established structural linkages with medium-sized and large businesses, which subcontract services and various functions. Moreover, they get their impetus from professionals and highly qualified technical personnel, especially in the up and coming economic sectors (for example, information).

When the subsistence microbusinesses are efficient, they can take part in promoting the social integration of young people and ally themselves with programmes to combat poverty. This type of collaboration will be considered effective when it helps to break the vicious cycle of poverty which has been the challenge in so many experiences of the kind in Latin America and the Caribbean. Development microenterprises, for their part, can assume dynamic roles in the economies of the region as long as they



have been carefully situated in niches where they can grow and develop. Significant participation of young people has been observed in initiatives of this kind, and this participation can increase in the future by preparing them adequately. In this sense, the experiences of institutions associated with the Junior Achievement Programme have been successful in almost all the countries of the region. This programme promotes the creation of businesses by offering practical experience with on-the-job training through schools at the intermediate level where individuals already in business act as tutors. Greater articulation of this type of initiative with public policies for the integration of young people into the work force could redound in greater benefits for the youth of the region.

Finally, but no less important, in the case of young people who already have jobs, efforts should be devoted to substantially improving their working conditions. As it was already pointed out, young people usually receive less remuneration than their elders for doing the same work. This discrimination is even greater in the case of young women, who are affected not only because of their age but also because of their sex. To address this situation, the relative weight given to experience and seniority in setting salaries should be balanced by an increased emphasis on skills and qualifications in order to even out the generational distribution of benefits. With regard to adolescents who work under oppressive conditions, it is indispensable to approve, and enforce compliance with, the international conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which prohibit all forms of exploitation in the workplace, especially in the case of workers under 15 years of age.

Even though not many studies have been done, it is known that a large proportion of the young workers who migrate between bordering countries are in vulnerable circumstances, especially when there are problems with their documentation. Although addressing this problem requires securing the agreement of two or more countries and the adoption of a multisectoral approach, it is possible to identify certain steps that can be taken. One initiative would be campaigns to raise consciousness on the part of governments, decision-making agents, and civil society in general regarding the need for the systematic monitoring of migratory trends and the conditions of young migrants in the countries where they work. This would make it possible to determine realistically the possibilities of intervening in such situations without sacrificing the aspirations and migratory patterns of groups that have the potential of becoming strategic actors for their home communities, as students do. Given the vulnerability of many young migrants, the countries should recognize that their migratory behaviour reflects situations in which it is extremely difficult to enter the work force in their countries of origin and also in the countries where they work, and that it is therefore important to promote actions aimed at retaining the population in their country of origin through their stable and productive incorporation in the work force.

## **5. Prevention of youth violence as the key to peaceful coexistence**

When one side of the coin represents the unemployment, exclusion, and vulnerability that affect the majority of Latin American and Caribbean youth, the other side shows a rising incidence of socially disruptive behaviour, including high rates of violence and delinquency. Although it is not fair to equate poverty with delinquency (lest the poor be penalized), the fact also cannot be ignored that insecurity, precarious living conditions, and persistent unemployment are tied to this behaviour in more ways than one. Since youth violence arises in many different contexts, the measures to be applied should take this diversity into account. In countries where the problem has taken on significant dimensions and alarming characteristics, priority should be given to getting young people involved in “unlearning” violence and fostering a culture of peace through educational and preventive activities. In those countries where the phenomenon is still limited to specific nuclei of youth, priorities should focus on prevention without overlooking treatment in existing cases.

The public safety programmes that have been implemented in Colombia and Uruguay in recent years show a course that can be taken by other countries, always taking into account the specific national situation. The components developed in Colombia and Uruguay can serve as a reference; they include retraining police; combating domestic violence, which generates the basic conditions for violence to be used in any other setting; promoting alternative mechanisms of conflict resolution such as social mediation; modernizing the judicial system and doing away with the image of partiality and impunity that prevails in several countries; offering peaceful alternatives for the socialization of young people such as youth houses and clubs; and improving the coverage of these subjects in the mass media by reducing sensationalism and promoting the most balanced and objective analyses possible.

There should be no need to point out that purely repressive measures are ineffective. Indeed, the numbers of incarcerated prisoners are steadily rising while at the same time citizens are increasingly unsafe. Moreover, such approaches are very costly in both financial and social terms. Therefore, the development and implementation of alternative programmes may be a more appropriate option, since it holds out the hope of having a better effect on the targeted individuals, as illustrated by the progress that has been made in countries where these programmes have been in operation for some time.

In addressing youth violence, it is imperative to combine measures about gun control and the unlearning of violence with initiatives aimed at facilitating the social reincorporation of the persons involved. This reincorporation is not a simple process, since it combines a number of diverse and complex elements, but the important thing is to break the vicious cycle of feedback that supports itself in highly perverse ways, such as prisons that apply the same rules to first-time offenders as they do to confirmed delinquents. The latter should be kept in special establishments that concentrate on their reform and return to society. By the same token, it is important to expand and improve assisted release programmes as an alternative for cases that merit a greater level of social confidence.

Another important factor in dealing with youth violence is the consistency and credibility of institutions that operate in this area. In the case of gangs, an important function of the institutions responsible for the problem is to insist that nonaggression pacts agreed to with gangs be complied with and supported. Experience has shown that mistrust grows when public authorities unexpectedly or repeatedly change the rules of the game, whereas, when agreements are respected, mutual trust increases and it is possible to explore the full extent of the agreements.

Finally, it is necessary to raise public awareness and try to get these subjects regarded more realistically and less subjectively, since young people tend to be excessively stigmatized by the general population, which sees a potential delinquent in every "strange" young person. It is also important to enlist the active cooperation of the public in these consciousness-raising initiatives—for example, by having the police approach the community and by promoting mutual understanding. In addition, it is essential to have the commitment and support of the various public and private institutions that are involved in these dynamic processes, particularly in the case of soccer teams, which sometimes openly encourage and support boisterous demonstrations by fans, thus inciting violence in the stadiums rather than trying to stop it. Another group to be enlisted is the police, whom young people often regard as an enemy that needs to be watched out for, rather than as an institution whose purpose is to provide protection. Their systematic recourse to round-ups, or *razzias*, as a preventive and dissuasive measure lends credence to this type of image.



## **6. Citizen participation as a contribution to the strengthening of democracy**

The exclusion of young people also extends to their participation as citizens. The possibility of their participation needs to be broached in ways that are more effective and attractive for the development of their rights. Measures in this area are justified for many reasons, but the most important one is that this participation is a fundamental means of strengthening democracy. The responsibility for developing and executing these measures should be shared by various institutional, social, and political actors.

The political participation of youth is a very important dimension for the strengthening of democracy. This participation can be promoted in several ways simultaneously. With regard to young people's reluctance to participate in the electoral process, it seems clear that the problem stems from loss of credibility on the part of political parties and their leaders, a situation that can be redressed by updating traditional political practices. At the same time, it is necessary to emphasize civic education, promoting it both in the schools and in informal learning situations and ensuring the intervention of young people themselves as leaders in the development of pertinent programmes. The mass media can provide effective support in this effort by creating opportunities for young people to express their views and debate about current political, economic, and social issues.

The political participation of youth does not end with the electoral process. There are other specific areas that have been the subject of interesting initiatives, including the creation of youth parliaments such as those that exist in Chile and Paraguay. Along this same line, another promising approach has been the creation of consultative bodies at the municipal level to set priorities for action and develop or reformulate plans and programmes. In any case, the key is that young people should not feel that they are being manipulated; they should feel that their participation makes sense and has weight in the decision-making process.

In the broader sense, the participation of youth can be encouraged through the creation or redefinition of specific roles and institutions. Among students, for example, it is essential to revitalize and modernize their participation in university co-administration, which has lapsed into bureaucratic and excessively politicized practices and alienated the majority of students from its operational dynamics. In intermediate schools there have been very encouraging experiences with student agents. In Colombia such a position was created constitutionally and legally to serve as an intermediary between school authorities, teachers and students, with focus on conflict resolution, the promotion of initiatives, and the facilitating of discussions (Pérez, 1998).

Revision of the logic that underlies the operation of youth organizations and movements is discussed elsewhere in another chapter. Although the creation of national and local youth councils, which bring together existing movements and take responsibility for representing their interests to government agencies and other organizations in civil society, would seem to be a promising approach, great care should be taken to avoid "clientelist" practices and the various forms of manipulation that complicate these processes. Another area that should be examined with prudence, as well as sustained pluralist inspiration, is that having to do with management of the tensions generated between the most politicized youth organizations and movements and those that have more strictly promotional or social profiles. In this same sense, tension between the zeal of youth protagonism and the characteristic inconsistency of young people, which is linked to the transitory nature of their condition, should also be handled with wisdom, using a form of adult logic that ensures continuity and growth while at the same time taking the interests of youth into account.

To summarize, the promotion of youth participation in society through various approaches and mechanisms can foster the contribution of young people to the development process. For this purpose, collective focal points can be created that will help to combat their social isolation and where learning models will be promoted that facilitate their incorporation into all levels of society. The integration efforts should be directed toward all youth from all social strata, counter to current trends towards residential and social segregation. This initiative will contribute to the accumulation of social capital in the social and community surroundings in which young people carry on their everyday dynamics of living.

### **7. Youth volunteers: youth as strategic actors in development**

The foregoing arguments have shown that it is appropriate to regard youth from complementary perspectives: as the targeted beneficiaries of a broad range of services, and as strategic actors in development. The first seeks to resolutely address the exclusion and vulnerability that afflict young people in the region, while the second attempts to promote their effective participation in the development processes. If public policies take both perspectives into account, and if provision is made for the components outlined above, it will be possible to imagine a different scenario in the future, in which the problems of new generations will be solved.

It is necessary, however, to go one step further and promote youth volunteerism as the central axis of public policies on youth in order to have a more propitious framework for promoting and exploring in depth the many initiatives that have been mentioned above. In this way, it will be possible to benefit from the broad participation of youth in a broad range of programmes —to combat poverty, promote literacy, maintain parks and plazas, build infrastructure, and protect the environment, to mention only a few of the areas in which such initiatives could be incorporated. The proposed participation of volunteers could generate positive feedback leading to a number of effects simultaneously, while at the same time enabling youth to gain experience that will help them to mature and better understand the local and national contexts in which they live and to make clearly visible contributions to the development of both their community and their country. In addition to creating opportunities for participation in a form, and with significance, that young people will value, these initiatives will make it possible to address the stigmas referred to earlier. At the same time, the volunteer work of youth will help to reduce the cost of providing services which would otherwise be performed by public employees or contracted out to private companies.

This type of initiative affords a framework within which various related problems can be addressed—for example, the problem of conscientious objectors who are opposed to compulsory military service. In place of military service, some countries have created an alternative civilian service much like a youth volunteer programme. Although the latter type of initiative brings up complicated issues, the subject is being studied and debated in almost all the countries of the region.

It is also in order to review the university extension programmes that are offered by several countries of the region in the form of internships. Many of these programs have become bureaucratized and routinized, and no longer meet the needs of any of the parties involved; students participate because it is part of the curriculum, but without any real interest, and the institutions that take them as interns give them assignments that are unrelated to their academic preparation. Although the mechanism itself is highly valuable, the reality has distorted its meaning. Nevertheless, this practice could be revitalized by giving renewed impetus to youth volunteerism.

The young people who participate in volunteer programmes should be adequately prepared, and for this purpose there should be public or private institutions that specialize in training them for particular types of volunteer service. There has already a body of relevant experience that can be referred to in studying ways of effectively expanding and consolidating such initiatives, and there are both universities and nongovernmental organizations that operate in these areas and are in a position to make qualified contributions on the subject. To facilitate the necessary articulation, youth institutes and ministries should make use of focal points to coordinate volunteer initiatives, bearing in mind that this would not imply any direct intervention in operational management.

In summary, youth volunteer programmes are an ambitious undertaking, but they offer great potential both for young people and for society as a whole. The undertaking is a viable one, because it can be based on activities that are already being carried out in a number of countries of the region. The many examples of youth participation following natural disasters (floods, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, earthquakes) in Central America and Venezuela are concrete experiences worthy of the highest commendation. There is no doubt that youth volunteerism can become an excellent means of transforming collective suffering into partnerships of solidarity and mutual support, and helping communities to see that it is possible to improve their quality of life.

Volunteerism can be an irreplaceable means of facilitating intergenerational relations, which in the coming decades will set the standard pattern for the "window of demographic opportunity" inherent in the current transition being experienced by the countries of the region. Indeed, the large numbers of children who have been the recent focus of social programmes will be considerably reduced, and it will still be a while before older adults become a large proportion of the total population. Although the demographic transition is following heterogeneous trajectories, the current relationship between the active and the inactive population is probably the most favourable in history, and advantage should be taken of this opportunity to promote productive transformation, the growth of savings and investments, the modernization of society, and the strengthening of democracy, fighting social inequalities and promoting the broadest possible participation of the population at all levels. Within this framework, youth are being called upon to play a leading role, given their relatively higher qualifications, their greater flexibility in dealing with new technologies and changing processes in the workplace, and their ready willingness to take on complex new challenges. Counting on the youth of Latin America and the Caribbean at this time in history will be the best response to the complex challenges that face the region in the new century.



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