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# CELADE

CENTRO LATINOAMERICANO DE DEMOGRAFIA

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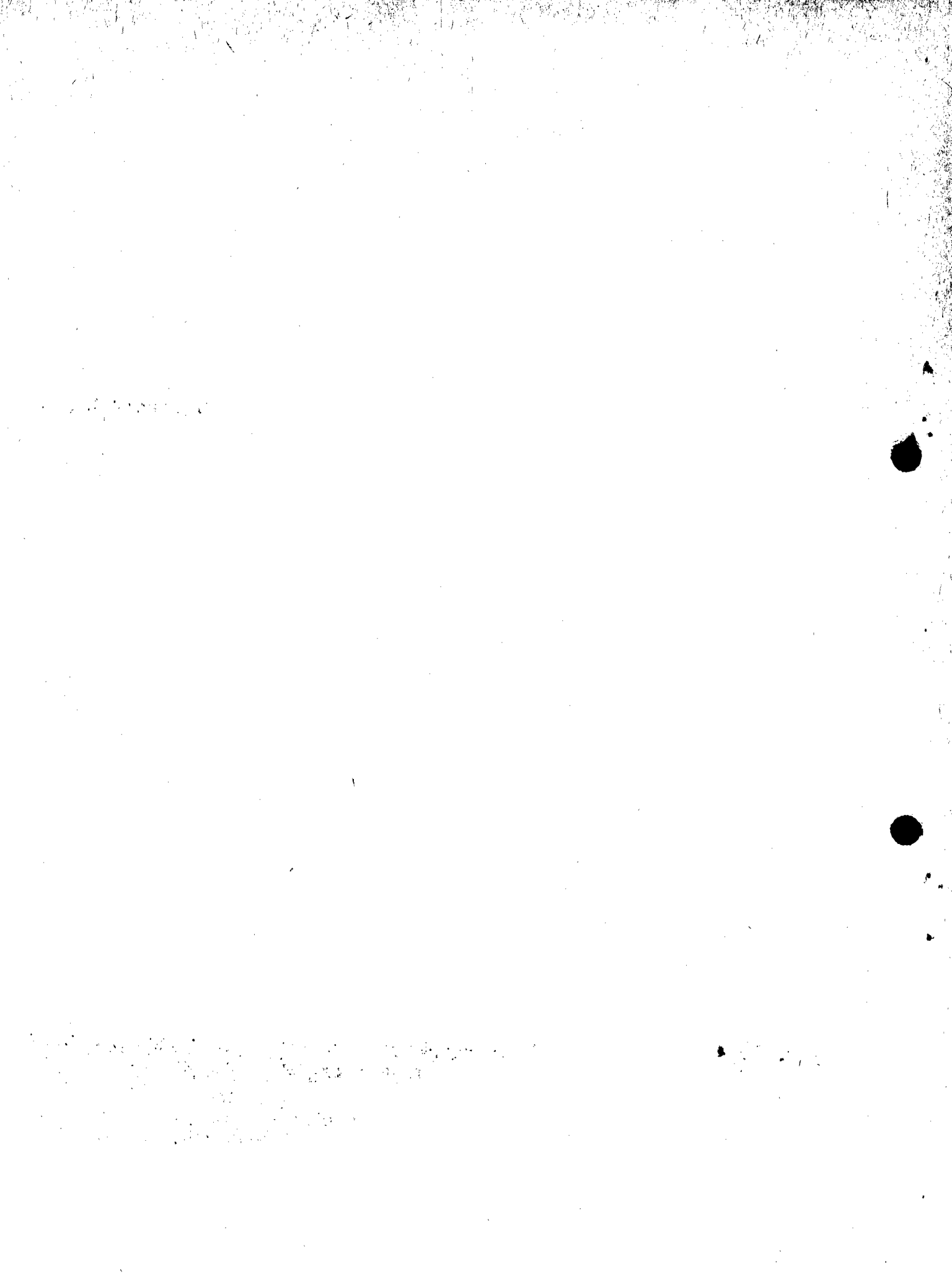
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BIBLIOTECA "GIORGIO MORTARA"  
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SOURCES OF DATA FOR THE STUDY OF FERTILITY  
IN THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

(Paper presented to the Workshop on  
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## I. POPULATION CENSUSES

The Latin American countries, in the past, have not devoted much attention to the gathering of data, through population censuses, on the number of children born alive. This assertion is based on two facts: a) the relatively small number of countries which have included in their census schedules a question on the subject; and b) the little preoccupation for gathering trustworthy information, which could be obtained through a good preparation of the census taker and the way of formulating the question.

In the censuses undertaken between the years 1945 and 1954, only to speak about a relatively near past, of the 18 Latin American countries that undertook population censuses, only 7 included a question on the number of children ever born to the women. Besides, it should be considered that questions were not always devoted to all the women 15 years of age and over and that in two cases they referred to both children born alive and dead.

### COUNTRIES THAT INVESTIGATED NUMBER OF CHILDREN, 1945-54

<u>Country</u>	<u>Date of the census</u>	<u>Section of the population to which the question was made</u>
Argentina <sup>a/</sup>	1947	Married women or women who had ever been married
Brazil <sup>a/</sup>	1950	Men and women to whom children had ever been born
Cuba	1953	All the women
Dominican Rep.	1950	Married women or women who had ever been married
Mexico	1950	Women to whom children had ever been born
Panama	1950	Women 12 years of age and over
Venezuela	1950	Women 12 years of age and over

a/ Children born alive and dead.

During the 60's, fifteen countries undertook population censuses. Eight of them included some type of question devoted to fertility studies and included this information in their punch cards:

**SUBJECTS INVESTIGATED AND PUNCHED IN THE CARDS, IN THE POPULATION CENSUSES OF THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES IN THE 60'S.**

Country	Type of question		
	Number of children born alive	Age at first child	Age at marriage
Argentina	X <sup>a/</sup>	-	X
Brazil	X <sup>b/</sup>	-	X
Chile	X	-	-
Guatemala	X	X	-
Mexico	X	-	-
Paraguay	X	X	-
Perú	X	X	-
Venezuela	X	X	-

Note: X indicates that the characteristic was investigated and punched in the card.

a/ Asked only to married women or women who had ever been married.

b/ Born alive and dead.

The countries that did not ask questions devoted to the study of fertility are: Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama and Uruguay.

As to the availability of the gathered information, it should be considered under two aspects: first, the tabulations generally prepared, and second, the up-to-dateness of the data published by the countries.

The plan of tabulations recommended by the Inter American Statistical Institute (IASI) for the 1970 censuses of the region, includes only one table of first priority devoted to the study of fertility and it refers only to distribution of the number of women by five year age groups, according to the number of children ever born alive (from 0 to 9 and 10 and over), for the country, Major Administrative Division, and urban and rural areas.

Among the tables considered of second priority the same table is proposed, by subordinating each age group to the educational level of women (incomplete primary education; completed primary education; intermediate education started but not completed; completed intermediate education; higher education started, but not completed; completed higher education; special education; and non specified educational level).

Among the tables considered useful, of lower priority than the above mentioned, the age distribution subordinated to the age at marriage is indicated. Since this characteristic is studied generally by very few countries, the table is practically aimless.

With respect to divulgation of data from the censuses undertaken during the 60's in the Latin American countries, the date at which it is carried out is worth while examining.

Country	D a t e s	
	Of census	Of final divulgation of data
Argentina	1950	1965
Brazil	1960	Pending
Colombia	1964	Pending
Costa Rica	1963	1966
Chile	1960	1964
Dominican Republic	1960	Pending
Ecuador	1962	1966
El Salvador	1961	1965
Guatemala	1964	Pending
Honduras	1961	1964
Mexico	1960	1964
Nicaragua	1962	1964
Panama	1960	1965
Paraguay	1962	1966
Peru	1961	1966
Uruguay	1963	Pending
Venezuela	1961	1966

As it can be seen, even though the number of children born alive is investigated, the tabulated information is rather poor, as it is available only by five year age groups of women and when divulged, it is done years in arrears.

#### 1. Census samples

As a consequence of this reality, which is also reflected on other subjects, CELADE organized a Bank of Demographic Data and obtained from the countries that undertook population censuses in the 60's, a sample of the information on cards or on tapes.

Several tabulations on fertility are programmed, in which the number of women and of children born alive will be presented according to different criteria: a) age groups and marital status; b) age groups and educational level; c) age groups and type of activity (economically active, housewives, etc.)

Although tabulations prepared by CELADE can contribute to a better study of the subject, they will have to be restricted to the attributes or variables investigated by the census and will not, therefore, embrace others that could be of interest for more careful studies on fertility. Besides, these same data are not generally up-to-date.

2. Future prospects

For the forthcoming censuses, which will be undertaken from 1970 on, a somewhat better situation can be foreseen in connection with the study of fertility.

On the basis of the already known questionnaire projects, much more importance is being given to the subject. The situation up to this date (31 December) is the following:

Country	Type of question	Section of the population to which the question will be asked
Argentina	Number of children ever born Children born alive Still births Children alive Dead children	All the women 12 years of age and over
Brazil	Number of children born alive	All the women 15 years of age and over
Cuba	Number of children born alive Age at first labour (alive or dead) Age at last labour (alive or dead)	All the women 12 years of age and over
Chile	Number of children ever born Still births Children born alive Children alive at present Children who have died	All the women 15 years of age and over
Mexico	Number of children born alive	Women to whom children have ever been born
Panama	Number of children born alive Children born alive during the last 12 months	All the women 15 years of age and over

Besides, it should be pointed out that the Directors of Statistics of the countries of the Central American Isthmus, at a meeting held in December 1968, with only one exception, agreed to include in the next questionnaires a question on the number of children born alive.



On the basis of the questionnaire projects known up to now, it is deduced that the question on the number of children ever born alive will be made in several different ways, which might allow for the analysis of the quality of data in function of the way of obtaining them, although the influence of other factors, such as educational level of the informer, preparation of census takers, etc. cannot be disregarded.

## II. REGISTRY OFFICE STATISTICS

As resolved at the meeting of the "Subcomisión de Estadísticas Demográficas, de Vivienda y Relacionadas" of the "Comisión de Mejoramiento de las Estadísticas Nacionales", held in December 1968, the following characteristics will be included in the reports on live borns:

### A. Geographical and related

1. Place of registration
2. Place of occurrence
3. Place of mother's habitual residence

### B. Of live born

1. Date of birth
2. Sex
3. Type of birth (or multiplicity)
4. Institution or house where the event took place
5. Assistance at labour

### C. Of mother

1. Date of birth (or age)
2. Number of children ever born to the mother during her lifetime (order of birth)
3. Marital status
4. Literacy
5. Educational level
6. Type of activity
7. Occupation

### D. Of father

1. Type of activity
2. Occupation

It would appear that registry office statistics could supply much more complete information on fertility than population censuses do, taking into account not only their periodicity but also the variables under study. Nevertheless, the limitations of such data in the Latin American countries are well-known.

The situation of Registry Office Statistics in the region is the following:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INFORMATION BY COUNTRY

Country	Information category	Latest year divulged	Notes
Argentina	C	1967	1967 (R)
Bolivia	U (R)	1967	-
Brazil	...	-	-
Colombia	U +	1966	Information based on baptism records
Costa Rica	C	1967	1967 (R)
Cuba	U +	1966	Estimated for 1963 and 1964
Chile	C	1966	Tabulated by year of occurrence; 5% is added from 1965 on
Dominican Republic	U +	1967	-
Ecuador	U	1966	-
El Salvador	C	1967	1967 (R)
Guatemala	C	1966	1966 (R)
Haiti	...	-	-
Honduras	U +	1965	-
Mexico	C +	1967	1967 (R)
Nicaragua	U †	1966	1966 (R)
Panama	C	1967	-
Paraguay	...	-	-
Peru	U +	1966	Estimated at 80% of total
Uruguay	U +	1966	-
Venezuela	U +	1967	1966-67 (R)

Source: United Nations Demographic Yearbook, 1967.

C represents at least 90% of facts occurred.

U represents a covering of less than 90%.

... not available data

R Provisional data

† Tabulation by year of registration and not of occurrence.

In summary, it can be said that population censuses and registry office statistics are, by different reasons, not satisfactory as sources of demographic information for fertility studies in the Latin American countries.

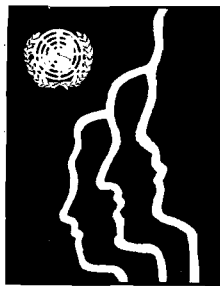
### III. DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEYS

Up to now, Latin American countries have not made use of surveys to obtain, in a systematic manner, data on fertility. Nevertheless, this could be the logical answer for several of these countries.

Experiences carried out by CELADE in Guanabara (Brazil) and Cauquenes (Chile), have demonstrated the possibility of utilizing prospective surveys by sample from area for obtaining the data that continuous statistics and censuses, by several reasons, have proved to be incapable of providing with the degree of detail and the opportunity required.

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