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The rural youth situation in Latin America and the Caribbean

by
Maia Guiskin
Pablo Yanes
Miguel del Castillo Negrete

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Authors:
Maia Guiskin, Pablo Yanes and Miguel del Castillo Negrete

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About the authors

Maia Guiskin is a social anthropologist from the Universidad de Chile and holds a master’s degree in population and development from the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Mexico. She specializes in methodology design and data analysis, both qualitative and quantitative, applied to social development. She has participated in several studies about the realities of the rural world in Chile, created ethnographies and performed data analysis. Currently, she is a study analyst at the Rural Development Department of the Agricultural Policies and Studies Office of the Chilean Agriculture Department.

Pablo Yanes is research coordinator for ECLAC’s subregional headquarter in Mexico. He is an economist with a master’s degree in government and public affairs from the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM). He was a civil servant in both the Mexican federal government and the Mexico City government for 20 years in the areas of formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies on matters of inequality, poverty, human rights, non-discrimination, gender, indigenous peoples, senior citizens, people with disabilities and institutional design, among others. He was general director of the Social Development Evaluation Council for Mexico City and has taught classes on comparative social policy in Latin America, and economic, social and environmental rights at UNAM’s political sciences and economics graduate programmes.

Miguel del Castillo Negrete has a PhD in social and political sciences (with a focus on sociology) from UNAM, a master’s degree in demography from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a bachelor’s degree in sociology from the UNAM School of Social and Political Sciences. He worked for Banco Nacional de México from 1978 to 2001. He has taught at UNAM and at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, also in Mexico. From 2005 to 2008 he was a professor at the Department of General Academic Studies of the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México and he directed its humanities magazine Estudios. Filosofía. Historia. Letras. from 2015 to 2018. In 2013 he was awarded the Alfonso Caso medal for being the most distinguished PhD graduate in the political sciences department at UNAM.

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Abstract

This article offers a general picture of the situation of rural youth in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The population is described through its demographic dynamics, its socio-economic characteristics, the situation of priority groups (women and indigenous peoples) and subjects of interest for these particular population groups (use of IT, sexual and reproductive health, violence and social participation). The available data regarding these dimensions are presented noting the existing gaps, both about urban youth and about adults, and contrasting the data with the available literature on youth in the region.

From the results, it is worth noting that the region's youth represents a heterogeneous group, although one with common characteristics that sets it apart as a group of interest. Particularly, it can be seen that there are still gaps between rural and urban youth in the areas of poverty, education and workforce integration in every country, although with important differences between them. Thus, rural youth appear to be an especially vulnerable group, a situation that is aggravated in women, indigenous people and Afro-descendants. The lack of opportunities in rural areas causes this group to migrate to cities in larger proportions than adults, which has important consequences for their places of origin.

As recommendations, we propose the introduction of the gap closure approach into the analysis, with particular emphasis on the new roles and the economic, social and political weight of younger rural women, recognizing the importance and implications of the ever-growing indigenous composition of the populations in LAC. Likewise, it is vital to advance the production of data that are disaggregated on a subregional scale and by age groups, which allow us to generate specific information and to develop public programmes and policies that are relevant, with a territorial and rights approach, and that contribute to closing gaps and ensuring equality and opportunity for all of the region's youth.

1. Introduction

Even though rural youth are key players in their territories' development, youth have been addressed from a predominantly urban perspective in the academic and public policy spheres. This is done without considering that, in reality, young people who reside in rural areas differ in many aspects from their urban counterparts, placing them in a position of greater social exclusion and vulnerability. This is reflected in the lack of updated data disaggregated by age groups and geographical area, which would allow us to go deeper both into rural youth's distinctive features and into the profound productive and demographic transformations of these territories.

Recent discussion of what is considered rural is very broad (Dirven et al., 2011; Berdegué and Proctor, 2014; McGranahan and Satterthwaite, 2014; Díaz and Fernández, 2017), and is based on both economic and population criteria. In addition, the understanding of rural settings poses important challenges in global culture, as a transformation is under way whereby the boundaries between urban and rural seem vaguer, with important changes happening at the rural economy level, which is currently multisectoral and diversified. For the purpose of this report and following the indications of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), "rural" is understood as anything that is not urban; in other words, rural, semi-rural and peri-urban areas. However, taking into account the available information and comparability between countries, figures will be presented according to the definitions of rurality that are used in national and regional measurements.

There is no consensus on the definition of youth, which is understood as a socially constructed concept depending on the historical context that does not necessarily refer to a set age. However, various international organizations delimit this population in order to address it. For example, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) considers youth to be all men and women between the ages of 15 and 29, while the United Nations limits this category to those between the ages of 15 and 24. Furthermore, the various countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region have their own definitions, which include a wide range of ages. In this report, the United Nations definition will be used, according to which "rural youth" will be all people between the ages of 15 and 24 who reside in areas defined as rural.

LAC is a multiple and diverse region, both among countries as well as among the different territories within each country. However, similar contexts can be identified that have a development model mainly based on raw material extraction, industrialization inequality, a growing diversification of economic activities and a social setting marked by great inequalities between population groups. This document addresses rural youth from a broad perspective, taking into account not only common points, but also each of the LAC countries' distinctive features, as well as subgroups within them. Special attention is placed on women and indigenous people, who are faced with greater exclusion, making them groups that are particularly excluded and subordinate.

In this document, a review is conducted of the main findings in the literature about rural youth in LAC, as well as a systematization of the available data for this population group, addressing the period between the years 2008 and 2018. The main sources that were used are reports made by ECLAC, and documents from the Latin American Center for Rural Development (RIMISP). In addition, reports from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Bank and the International Youth Organization for Ibero-America (OIJ) were used as complementary sources. The data mainly come from ECLAC, CEPALSTAT and the database system of the Youth Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. Furthermore, in order to develop some of the indicators, census data and administrative records from each country were used.

The report is structured into four main sections. In section 2, the findings of the main works that have characterized the youth population who live in LAC's rural areas based on socio-demographic variables are synthesized, providing data to understand this population group's demographic dynamic. In section 3, the rural youth of the region is characterized socio-economically, noting the differences between subgroups, as well as compared with urban youth, especially in education, employment and poverty. In section 4, the specific situation of women and indigenous people is addressed as a priority group among rural youth. Section 5 reviews the main problems that affect the rural youth of the region according to the literature, analysing the available data and identifying the information gaps. Lastly, some comments and recommendations are given (section 6).

2. Demographic dynamics of rural youth in Latin America and the Caribbean

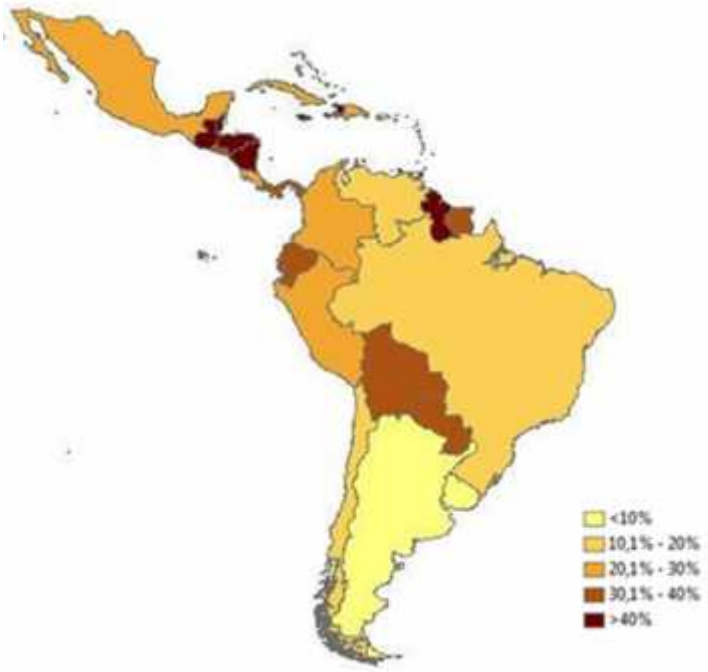
There are many documents relating to youth in LAC, in large part coordinated by ECLAC along with other international organizations in the reviewed literature. However, most of these are focused on urban youth. Some briefly mention the existing gaps with urban areas, recognizing rural youth as a population that is especially vulnerable, and only few go in depth into the specific situation the rural youth face in the region. The findings in the reviewed literature are corroborated by the available data, showing how the demographic dynamics' main components behave within this population group.

2.1 Population distribution by geographical area

According to ECLAC estimates (2017), approximately 20 per cent of the population of Latin America resides in rural areas.[1] That said, when analysing the amount of rural population broken down by country, very different figures emerge. In figure 1, the lighter colours show countries with lower percentages of rural population, and the darker colours show those with higher percentages.

[1] Considering "rural" as defined by each country. Data for 20 countries in the region: Argentina, (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay and (the Bolivarian Republic of) Venezuela. For more details, see ECLAC (2017a) (in Spanish).

Figure 1. Latin America and the Caribbean: map of population distribution in rural and urban areas, 2015.



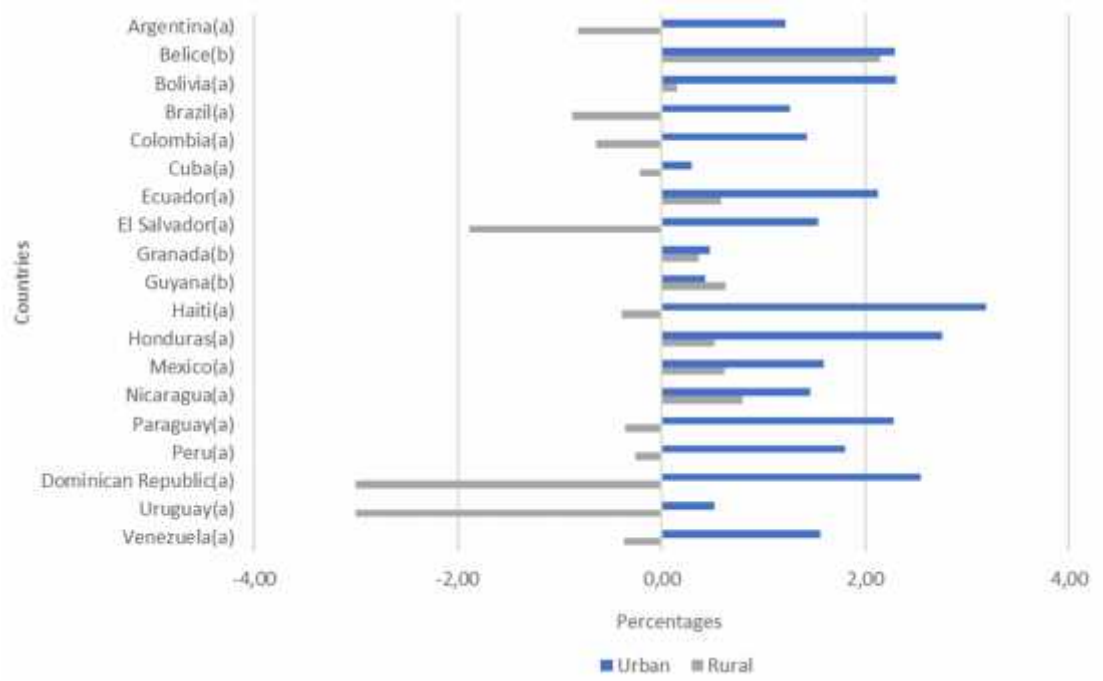
Source: created by the author based on data from CEPALSTAT 2015 (ECLAC, Population Database, 2017b).

It can be observed that in some Latin American countries, particularly Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and (the Bolivarian Republic of) Venezuela, the percentage of rural population does not reach 20 per cent, in contrast with the reality of countries such as Peru and (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia, where the figures vary from 20 per cent to 30 per cent. Note the fact that Central American countries are the ones presented as being the most rural, with rural population exceeding 40 per cent.

While the LAC rural population has exhibited a downward trend in the past decades, with a decrease of approximately 5 percentage points between 2000 and 2015 (CELADE, 2017), when disaggregating the population growth rate by countries, one finds a mixed picture that reflects various realities that coexist on a regional level (figure 2).

The rates of demographic growth or decline in the period 2010-2015 show the differences between urban and rural areas. While growth is observed in all countries in urban areas, in rural areas the situation varies: 11 of the countries show a negative growth rate and eight show a positive one. Furthermore, even though in some countries an increase is observed in the rural population, in all cases the increase is less than in urban areas.

Figure 2. Latin America (19 countries): population growth rate by geographical area, 2010-2015



Source: created by the author based on (a) ECLAC, 2017 revision for Latin America and (b) UNDESA Global Urbanization Prospects, 2018 revision.

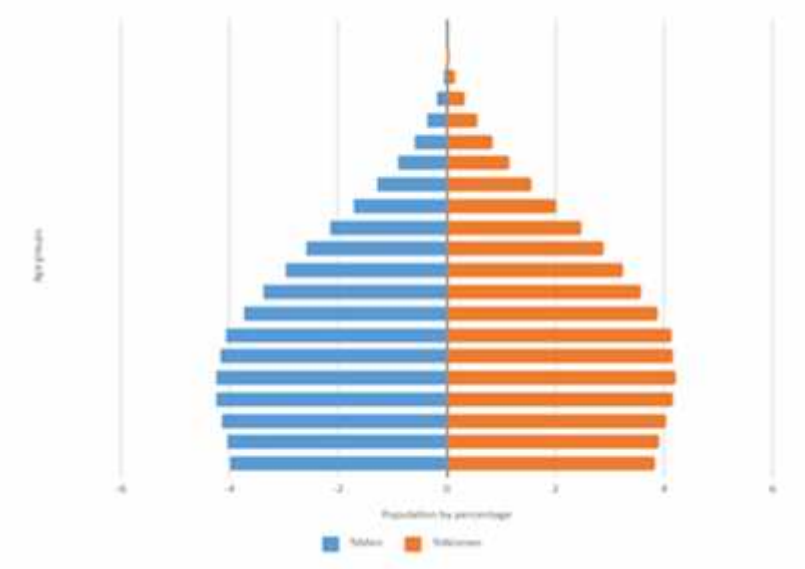
2.2 Population structure by geographical area

After introducing the urban and rural populations' main tendencies at the regional level, it is necessary to look deeper into the demographic characteristics which provide information regarding differences that occur on a territorial level. In this respect, two population pyramids are presented: one for the urban area (figure 3) and the other for the rural area (figure 4). These show the population structure of LAC countries in an aggregated manner, noting important differences in regard to the population's age structure as well as gender distribution according to geographical area.

From the comparison of the population pyramids between LAC countries' geographic areas, it is observed that, even though both pyramids show a narrowing at the base, indicating a falling birth rate, the structure of both populations is different. The urban pyramid shows a bulb shape, with the majority of the population concentrated in the intermediate age groups, indicating a decline in birth rate as well as greater mortality control. In contrast, the rural pyramid shows a progressive trend that indicates a mostly young population, with a smaller percentage of older adults.

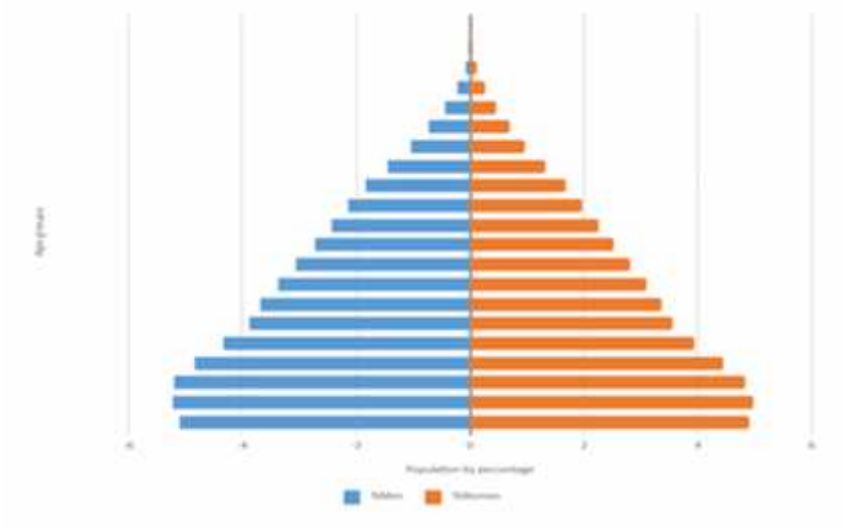
The literature reviewed suggests that the percentage of youth population in the overall population is less in rural areas than in urban areas (ECLAC, 2008). This is clearly reflected in the comparison of the graphs: while in the urban area youth represent the largest population group, a smaller percentage is observed in the rural area. This fact can be associated with a greater migration of young people of working age from the countryside to the city. The small number of young people in rural areas is also related to the ageing of the rural population (ECLAC et al., 2013). It is suggested that, in the last 20 years, the rural population's growth rate has been negative in almost all of the region's countries, along with an increase in the inhabitants' average age, relating to the process of young people's migration to the city in search of better opportunities (ECLAC et al., 2013). While these trends are known, the regional figures of ageing found in urban areas have not yet been reached in rural areas, as in rural areas there are 37 older adults for every 100 people under the age of 15, compared with 49 in urban areas (CELADE, 2017).

Figure 3. Latin America (20 countries): population pyramid, urban area, 2017.



Source: created by the author based on ECLAC, 2017 revision for Latin America and UN, Global Urbanization Prospects, 2018 revision.

Figure 4. Latin America (20 countries): population pyramid, rural area, 2017



Source: created by the author based on ECLAC, 2017 revision for Latin America and UN, Global Urbanization Prospects, 2018 revision.

2.3 Demographic characteristics of rural youth population

This document focuses on the youth population that inhabits rural areas in LAC countries. According to the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE, 2017) data, it is estimated that approximately 107 million people in the region are young people, equivalent to 17 per cent of the total population. Of these, approximately 80 per cent live in urban areas (86 million) and 20 per cent in rural areas (21 million), a difference that will probably increase in the coming years in favour of urban areas,

to a great extent because of the migration process in this age group. Table 1 displays the total rural and urban youth population by country.

Table 1. Latin America (15 countries): population between the ages of 15 and 24, by geographical area, 2013

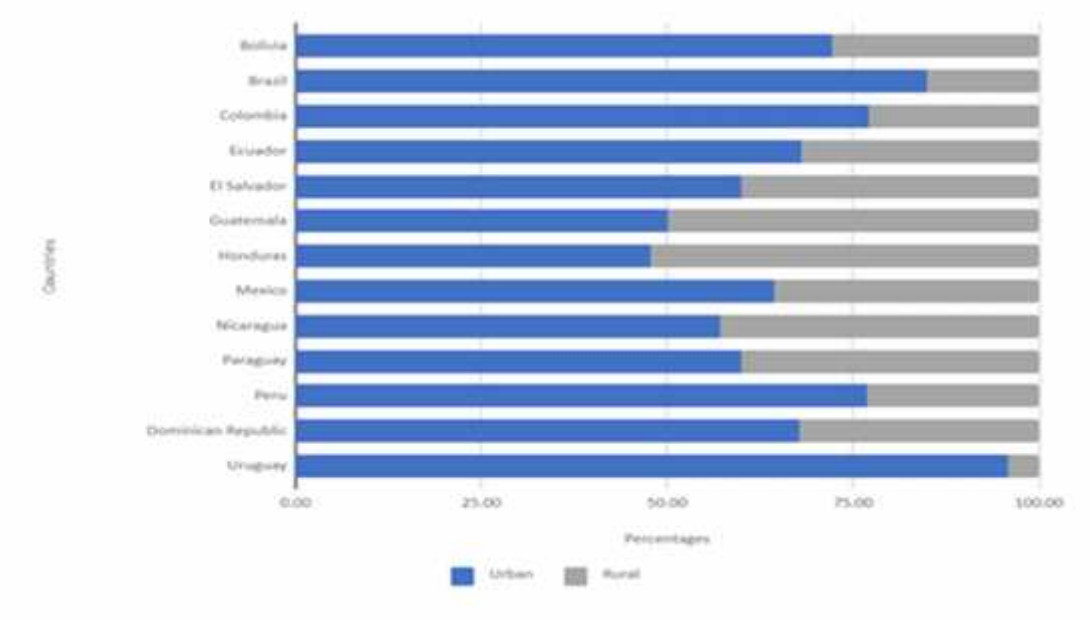
Countries	Urban	Rural	Total
Argentina	4,332,191	n/a	n/a
Bolivia	1,485,678	575,725	2,061,403
Brazil	28,324,465	5,023,361	33,347,826
Colombia	6,290,282	1,864,139	8,154,421
Dominican Republic	1,374,425	652,227	2,026,652
Ecuador	1,964,734	918,956	2,883,690
El Salvador	798,700	532,265	1,330,965
Guatemala	1,264,942	1,266,378	2,531,320
Honduras	862,173	939,457	1,801,630
Mexico	14,029,203	7,750,598	21,779,801
Nicaragua	725,156	545,188	1,270,344
Paraguay	816,142	542,167	1,358,309
Peru	3,686,933	1,113,650	4,800,583
Uruguay	500,115	21,694	521,809
Venezuela	5,404,386	n/a	n/a

Source: created by the author based on Youth Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (JUVELAC) of ECLAC, with information from household surveys by country.

Additionally, figure 5 shows, by percentages, how the youth population is distributed between geographical areas by country.

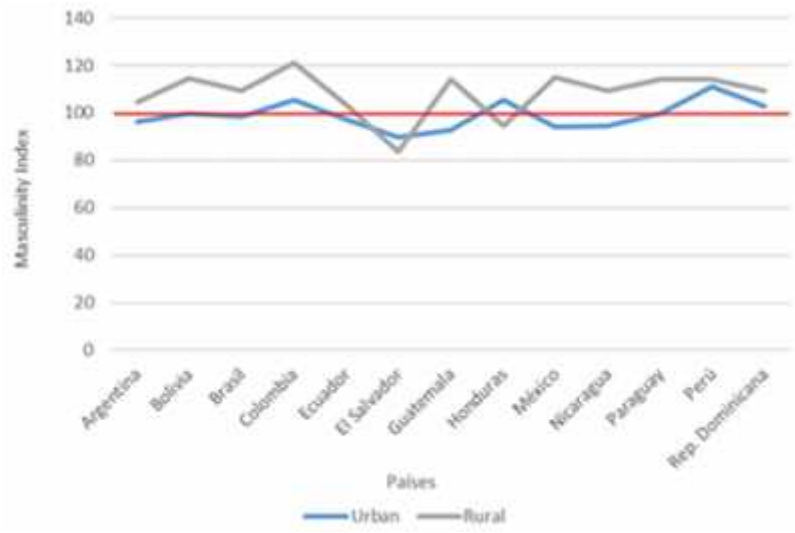
It is noteworthy that the youth population is unevenly distributed within the various countries. In Uruguay, the rural youth population does not reach 5 per cent, while in Guatemala and Honduras it represents about half the youth population. Another interesting indicator is the youth populations' gender distribution (figure 6), which shows different trends between urban and rural areas.

Figure 5. Latin America (13 countries): youth population (%) between the ages of 15 and 24, by geographical area, 2013



Source: created by the author based on ECLAC, 2017 revision for Latin America and UN, Global Urbanization Prospects, 2018 revision.

Figure 6. Latin America (13 countries): masculinity index between the ages of 15 and 24 by geographical area, 2013



Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC of ECLAC, with information from household surveys by country.

The masculinity index for the total population of LAC is 97.6 men for every 100 women, but with important differences between rural and urban areas, where it reaches 95.2 and 107.4 respectively (CELADE, 2017). Within the youth population, it is possible to observe that this index follows the regional tendency, with a larger proportion of men in rural areas, with the exceptions of Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua. This is consistent with what has been found in a literature review, which indicates that the larger masculinity index in rural areas is related to increased female migration from the countryside to the city as a consequence of a lack of work opportunities in the countryside as compared with men (ECLAC, 2008; Dirven, 2016).

2.4 Migration of the rural youth population

In the literature, it is shown that rural youth have a greater propensity to migrate than both urban youth and rural adults. There are several reasons why young people are more prone to migrate than the rest of the population: establishing new homes, college admissions, or gaining employment that entails relocating as a function of opportunities and abilities that cannot be pursued in their place of origin (ECLAC, 2008). Here, regional analyses indicate that a significant decrease in youth cohorts exists in rural areas as a result of the falling birth rate and net emigration, as well as an increase in elderly people, resulting from the increase in life expectancy (Dirven, 2016).

Regardless, the source data needed for understanding these migration processes are limited. For the present report, data from the most recent population census were used, utilizing information about internal population flow in the last five-year period available in each country. Table 2 shows the net migration rates between rural and urban municipalities[2] for young people from four countries: Ecuador, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

In three of the four countries considered, the net migration rate[3] for the youth population is positive for urban areas and negative for rural areas, indicating that, while the former is increasing in population, the latter have lost population in the last five years, according to available data. Thus, it is shown that, for youth, the countryside is an expulsion pole, while cities are an attraction pole. The Dominican Republic appears to be the exception, where urban areas have lost a larger share of the youth population than rural ones. If we compare these rates with those of the adult population, we observe that both in Ecuador and in Uruguay the migratory tendency is from the cities to the countryside, while in the Dominican Republic and Mexico the tendency that this population shows is consistent with that of the youth population. On a general level, the differences between countries with lower migration rates, Ecuador and Uruguay, and larger migratory movements, Mexico and the Dominican Republic, are noteworthy. These differences can be attributed to the different stages of urbanization in each country.

According to the literature, the net migration from the countryside to the city is more than half (almost two thirds in the case of women) of the urban youth population growth. This phenomenon is explained by the living conditions of young people in rural areas, where higher levels of poverty, lower educational achievements, less institutionalized jobs, difficulties accessing productive assets and particularly critical conditions for young rural indigenous people are observed (ECLAC, 2008). In that regard, the migration of young people towards jobs or areas that offer better opportunities is a result of both the characteristics of family farming and rural areas and of an important risk factor for the success of their development, and even for its continuity (Dirven, 2016).

While Cazzuffi and Fernández (2018) recognize that in terms of internal migration the majority of the poles of expulsion for young people are found in rural areas, they suggest that not all rural areas suffer a loss of youth population; rather, only those areas with certain particular characteristics do. Among these are the poorest areas, those whose economy depends mainly on agriculture, and those that display lower levels of human capital among their populations. All of these have a greater effect on young people's mobility than on that of adults.

To expand on the information provided by the net migration rates, table 3 offers a more in-depth view of the differences between countries. It shows emigration rates, understood as the change in residency from rural areas to urban areas, as well as immigration rates, defined as movements from

[2] Uruguay and Ecuador do not have a classification of municipalities by urban/rural. In those cases, rural areas refer to areas with a population of fewer than 15,000 inhabitants.
[3] The net migration rate the difference between immigration and emigration rates, indicating a population growth or decrease.

urban areas to rural areas, differentiated by gender and contrasting the situation between young people and adults.

Table 2. Latin America (four countries): rates of immigration, emigration and net migration (per 1,000) of the population aged 15 to 24 years old and 25 years and older by geographical area

Country	Age group		Immigration		Emigration		Net migration	
Ecuador (a)	15-24	*Residence in 2010*	*Residence in 2005*					
			Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
		Rural		3.85		3.95		-0.1
		Urban	3.95		3.85		0.1	
	25 and older	*Residence in 2010*	*Residence in 2005*					
			Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
		Rural		3.05		2.02		1.02
		Urban	2.02		3.05		-1.02	
Mexico (b)	15-24	*Residence in 2015*	*Residence in 2010*					
			Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
		Rural		0.04		2.74		-2.7
		Urban	2.74		0.04		2.7	
	25 and older	*Residence in 2015*	*Residence in 2010*					
			Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
		Rural		0.05		2.78		-2.73
		Urban	2.78		0.05		2.73	
Dominican Republic (c)	15-24	*Residence in 2010*	*Residence in* 2005					
			Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
		Rural		15.15		8.48		6.67
		Urban	8.48		15.15		-6.67	
	25 and older	*Residence in 2010*	*Residence in* 2005					
			Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
		Rural		13.93		7.67		6.26
		Urban	7.67		13.93		-6.26	
Uruguay (d)	15-24	*Residence in 2011*	*Residence in 2006*					
			Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
		Rural		3.4		4.85		-1.45
		Urban	4.85		3.4		1.45	
	25 and older	*Residence in 2011*	*Residence in 2006*					
			Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
		Rural		3.28		2.03		1.25
		Urban	2.03		3.28		-1.25	

Sources: (a) Population and Housing Census Micro-Data 2010 and Population Projections, Datosmacro web. Available at: https://datosmacro.expansion.com/demografia/estructura-poblacion/ecuador
(b) Intercensus Survey 2015 and Dynamic Tables Population and Housing Census 2010.
(c) Population and Housing Census Sample 2010 and Population Projections, 2000-2030, the Dominican Republic. Available at: https://www.one.gob.do/demograficas/proyecciones-de-poblacion
(d) Population and Housing Census 2011 (REDATAM) and Population Projections 1950-2050, Uruguay. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/7430

Table 3. Latin America (four countries): rates of migration from and towards rural areas, by gender and age group

Country	Rate	Youth (ages 15-24)		Adults (ages 25-90)	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
Ecuador (a)	Emigration rate, 2005-2010	3.77	4.13	2.15	1.91
	Immigration rate, 2005-2010	3.72	3.98	3.51	2.61
Mexico (b)	Emigration rate, 2010-2015	2.74	2.75	2.79	2.77
	Immigration rate, 2010-2015	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.04
Dominican Republic (c)	Emigration rate, 2005-2010	8.16	8.80	8.01	7.34
	Immigration rate, 2005-2010	15.57	14.72	14.39	13.47
Uruguay (d)	Emigration rate, 2006-2011	4.08	5.64	2.10	1.98
	Immigration rate, 2006-2011	3.03	3.77	3.46	3.12

Sources:

(a) Population and Housing Census Micro-Data 2010 and Population Projections, Datosmacro web. Available at: https://datosmacro.expansion.com/demografia/estructura-poblacion/ecuador
(b) Intercensus Survey 2015 and Dynamic Tables Population and Housing Census 2010.
(c) Population and Housing Census Sample 2010 and Population Projections, 2000-2030, the Dominican Republic. Available at: https://www.one.gob.do/demograficas/proyecciones-de-poblacion
(d) Population and Housing Census 2011 (REDATAM) and Population Projections 1950-2050, Uruguay. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/7430

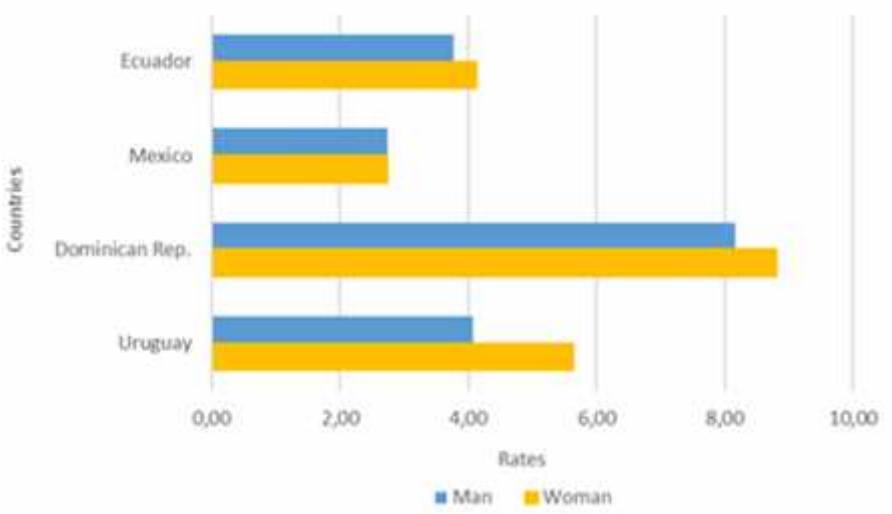
It can be seen that, although there is a higher rate of emigration from rural areas, there is also migration from urban areas to the countryside, this being very noticeable in the Dominican Republic. The case of Mexico is peculiar because immigration from urban areas to rural areas is virtually non-existent. In comparing young people with adults, it can be seen that young people are indeed more prone to migrate than adults, with the exception of Mexico, where both age groups show similar figures. However, there are also differences among young people by gender, which can clearly be seen in figure 7, showing the emigration rates in young adults from rural areas to urban areas, differentiated by men and women.

Within the adult population, general immigration rates are lower than the rates for the youth population, and men migrate in larger proportions than women. In the case of youth, emigration rates from the countryside to the city are higher for women in all four countries, a gap that is wider in Uruguay and the Dominican Republic and narrower in Mexico and Ecuador. The reasons for migrating differ between young men and young women. Díaz and Fernández (2017) note that more women migrate in order to marry or for family reunification and more men do so in search of work. Likewise, ECLAC (2008) states that young rural women have fewer opportunities for income and work participation than men, due to domestic work, which drives them to migrate to urban areas in search of better opportunities and more autonomy. This translates to a larger percentage of young women located in urban areas, while young men are more prevalent in rural areas, as they have a larger share of work participation.

In regard to international migration, although it is suggested that it is an important phenomenon among young people, there are no data disaggregated by geographical area of origin of young people. This is considered a significant information gap in regard to rural youth of the region.[4]

[4] While there are data for the United States, one of the highest recipients of Latin-American migrants, there are only general data on the number of undocumented immigrants, as well as naturalized foreigners and those with legal residence, thus not allowing the identification of young people of rural origin. For more information, see Department of Homeland Security (2019a,b).

Figure 7. Latin America (four countries): emigration rates from rural and urban areas for youth and adults, by gender



Sources:
Ecuador: Population and Housing Census Micro-Data 2010 and Population Projections, Datosmacro web.
Mexico: Intercensus Survey 2015 and Dynamic Tables Population and Housing Census 2010.
Dominican Republic: Population and Housing Census Sample 2010 and Population Projections, 2000-2030, the Dominican Republic.
Uruguay: Population and Housing Census 2011 (REDATAM) and Population Projections 1950-2050, Uruguay.

3. Socio-economic characterization

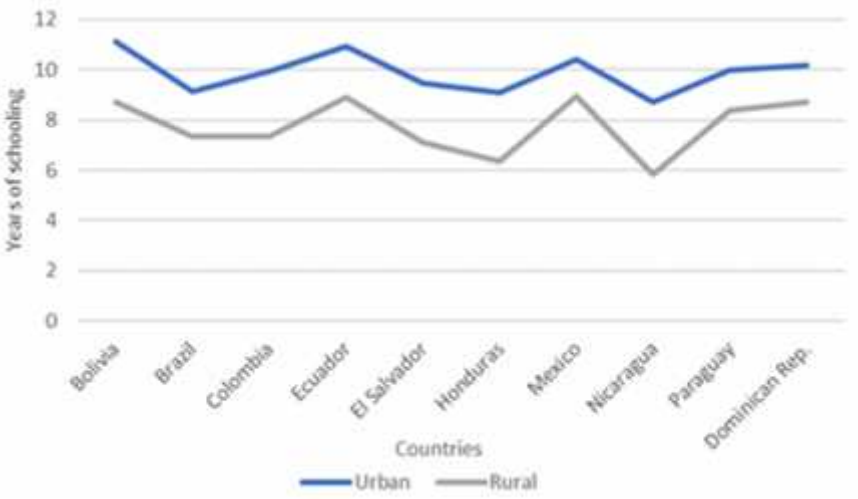
ECLAC establishes that the dimensions of education and employment represent “the master key of youth social inclusion” (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015, p. 23), as they are key to the development of abilities in new generations. This relates to taking advantage of the window of demographic dividends experienced by most of the region’s countries, with an equal development perspective (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015). However, important gaps between youth groups are still observed depending on their places of origin, with rural youth being in a disadvantageous position compared with their urban peers (ECLAC, 2008; Dirven, 2016; Espejo, 2017). Furthermore, it has been determined that living conditions of young people in rural areas are more critical than those in urban areas with a higher incidence of poverty, acting as an expulsion factor in young people who emigrate to cities (ECLAC, 2008).

3.1 Education

It has been observed that rural youth have higher illiteracy rates, lower average years of education, fewer opportunities to complete secondary education and limited access to a university education compared with urban youth (Díaz and Fernández, 2017). These gaps can be observed in figure 8, which shows the average years of education for the youth population by geographical area

Even though, in both urban and rural areas, the average years of education rose between 2000 and 2010, the growth was sharper in the 2010 cohort. Likewise, in figure 8, it is observed that urban youth have more years of education on average than rural youth, showing that the educational gap in the region persists. In addition, differences between countries stand out, with (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico and the Dominican Republic being the ones that display the best results in this variable.

Figure 8. Latin America (10 countries): average years of education for the population aged 15-24 by geographical area, 2010



Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC of ECLAC, with information from household surveys by country.

Despite this disadvantaged position that has been maintained over time, important progress has also been recognized in both the retention of education systems and effective completion of secondary education, contributing to the steady closing of gaps with urban youth (ECLAC, 2008). Here it is noted that women are the ones who have shown the greatest advances in this area, in both urban and rural areas (Espejo, 2017). Table 4 shows the rates of effective completion of secondary education, allowing us to see differences by geographical area and by gender.

Table 4. Latin America (15 countries): percentage of population between the ages of 20 and 24 who completed secondary education, by gender and geographical area, 2014

Country	Urban			Rural		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Argentina	58.89	68.74	63.76	63.74	73.21	68.41
Bolivia	85.94	84.61	85.22	58.09	45.16	52.07
Brazil	60.14	71.01	65.63	36.07	45.03	40.38
Colombia	74.47	80.36	77.53	38.64	44.63	41.73
Dominican Republic	58.13	74.72	66.45	41.09	58.45	48.63
Ecuador	68.98	69.64	69.31	51.18	46.98	49.11
El Salvador	53.08	60.47	56.95	27.00	28.64	27.87
Guatemala	43.55	46.09	44.87	22.02	18.55	20.18
Honduras	53.10	61.76	57.78	19.39	32.55	25.50
Mexico	56.64	60.11	58.39	36.85	38.86	37.87
Nicaragua*	43.35	52.69	48.35	16.63	18.00	17.27
Paraguay	70.80	76.75	73.86	37.02	42.12	39.40
Peru	86.54	87.43	86.99	67.26	58.32	63.08
Uruguay	35.86	48.54	42.13	21.62	34.80	28.00
Venezuela*	68.49	77.03	72.81	n/a	n/a	n/a

*Data from 2013.

Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC of ECLAC, with information from household surveys by country.

The data presented in table 4 are consistent with what was found in the reviewed literature. It is observed that, in 14 out of the 15 countries covered, the percentage of young people who completed secondary education is greater in urban areas, Argentina being the exception. Nevertheless, the heterogeneity between countries is noteworthy, showing a difference of about 20 percentage points between the best and worst indicators in urban areas, with the gap widening to around 50 percentage points in rural areas. That said, when the data are broken down by gender, it is observed that women display greater effective completion in urban areas in almost every country. On the other hand, in rural areas the situation is more varied, more favourable towards men some countries and more favourable towards women in others.

In regard to school attendance, while the figures are slightly better for the urban population, the gap in the rural population is not as pronounced as seen in other indicators. Therefore, it is of interest to go into more depth about how the indicator behaves inside rural areas by breaking it down by five-year age groups and income quintile.

Table 5. Latin American (10 countries): percentage of the population aged 15 to 24 years that attends an educational establishment, by geographical area, age group and income quintile, 2014

Country	Area	Age group									
		15-19					20-24				
		Income quintile					Income quintile				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
Brazil	Urban	66.5	66.1	65.0	67.1	80.1	14.3	17.7	22.0	28.8	47.1
	Rural	68.6	64.4	65.3	63.4	70.5	11.6	12.6	13.8	18.8	25.4
Dominican Republic	Urban	74.1	69.4	75.5	72.8	74.7	36	32.9	28	46.6	57.3
	Rural	64.4	67.3	65	54	61.1	27.7	20.5	23.6	28.3	26.2
Ecuador	Urban	68.1	72.2	67.4	71.8	76.8	20.7	23.3	30.4	29.7	46.1
	Rural	68.4	65.1	62.1	61.4	66.6	15.6	14.5	12.6	17.6	22.2
El Salvador	Urban	55.5	66.3	67.7	72.2	81.2	8.2	18.5	22.7	27.7	45.7
	Rural	41.6	52.1	51.5	52.6	60.2	3.8	6.6	9.6	14.5	17
Guatemala	Urban	42.1	40.3	47.1	57.2	69.4	2.2	5	9.7	12.4	29
	Rural	29.3	30.7	29.9	43.8	57.2	3.8	6.8	4.4	6.9	12.6
Honduras	Urban	47.3	52.6	60.4	60	69.5	15.6	18.4	19.2	23.1	42.9
	Rural	20.3	25	32.5	43.2	58.1	3.5	6.6	7.7	15.4	26.5
Mexico	Urban	55.6	62.1	61.7	70.9	80.6	18.3	17.1	27.1	34.2	48.5
	Rural	43.5	57.5	54.4	58.9	70.4	4.2	12.8	17	20.2	31.1
Nicaragua	Urban	45.7	59.6	57.4	57.7	67.5	20	21.9	21.7	24.9	37.2
	Rural	35.5	35.6	34.8	28.9	38.6	11	12.2	13.4	11.9	15.5
Paraguay	Urban	60.6	73.9	71.6	80.3	83.8	19.9	28.2	34.5	41.9	57.1
	Rural	60.8	61.2	61	57.5	49.7	10.8	14.4	21.4	17.1	22.9
Peru	Urban	65.4	61.9	57.1	62.6	66.8	20.2	26.7	30.3	33.5	46.8
	Rural	62	59.3	52	51.7	57.7	17.6	20.6	28.7	23.7	29.4

Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC of ECLAC, with information from household surveys by country.

When comparing the school attendance numbers for youth residing in urban and rural areas, we can observe that these are systematically lower in the latter. Within these numbers, school attendance is higher among youth from 15 to 19 years of age than among those aged 20 to 24 years, which makes

sense considering that the first group, normatively, should be coursing grades which are obligatory in most of the region's countries. Nevertheless, young people between the ages of 20 and 24 are expected to pursue higher education.[5] However, access to tertiary education is low in the region, in both urban and rural areas, but particularly in the latter (ECLAC, 2008; Espejo, 2017; Díaz and Fernández, 2017). In rural areas, the number of young people who reach this level of education is minimal, in part because of the location of education centres, which are mainly found in major cities (ECLAC, 2008).

It is interesting to analyse the data disaggregated by income quintile, observing significant differences among countries and age groups (see table 5). In this sense, in young people from ages 15 to 19 a heterogeneous relationship is observed between level of income and attendance at an educational institution. However, this relationship follows a clearer pattern among young people from 20 to 24 years of age: the percentage of attendance increases in the higher income quintiles, with the exception of the Dominican Republic. These data establish that secondary education attendance (which normatively corresponds to the 15- to 19-year-old age group) is higher in rural areas and is not directly correlated with household income. This is consistent with the literature reviewed, which indicates that the secondary education gap has been closing between urban and rural areas (ECLAC, 2008; Espejo, 2007). Furthermore, the present data indicate that access to tertiary education (which normatively corresponds to the 20- to 24-year-old age group) in rural areas is in fact determined by socio-economic status. However, it still remains low in all quintiles, indicating early integration of rural youth into the labour market (ECLAC, 2008).

The previous results are explained, in part, by the lack of household income, which can lead families to decide that a young person must work. The incompatibility between education and employment, the lack of relevance of educational curricula to their needs and interests, and the focus of efforts to expand the coverage of secondary education on urban areas have led to rural youth either dropping out of school or migrating to the cities (ECLAC, 2008).

3.2 Labour integration

In the past few decades, a change has been found in the production structure in rural areas, with a decrease in the number of households that engage partially or exclusively in agriculture. This is accompanied by an increase in those dedicated to non-agricultural rural employment (NARE), particularly among women and young people (ECLAC et al., 2013, 2015; Dirven et al., 2011). This change has been associated with an improvement in rural youth employment as formal wage employment has increased, potentially meaning higher wages, better labour conditions and greater access to social security. At the same time, involvement in highly informal employment categories, such as agricultural work and unpaid family work (Dirven, 2016), has decreased. However, this transformation has varied greatly among the various countries. Despite this, the labour insertion conditions, in a broad sense, continue to be characterized by precariousness and weakness in effective access to rights.

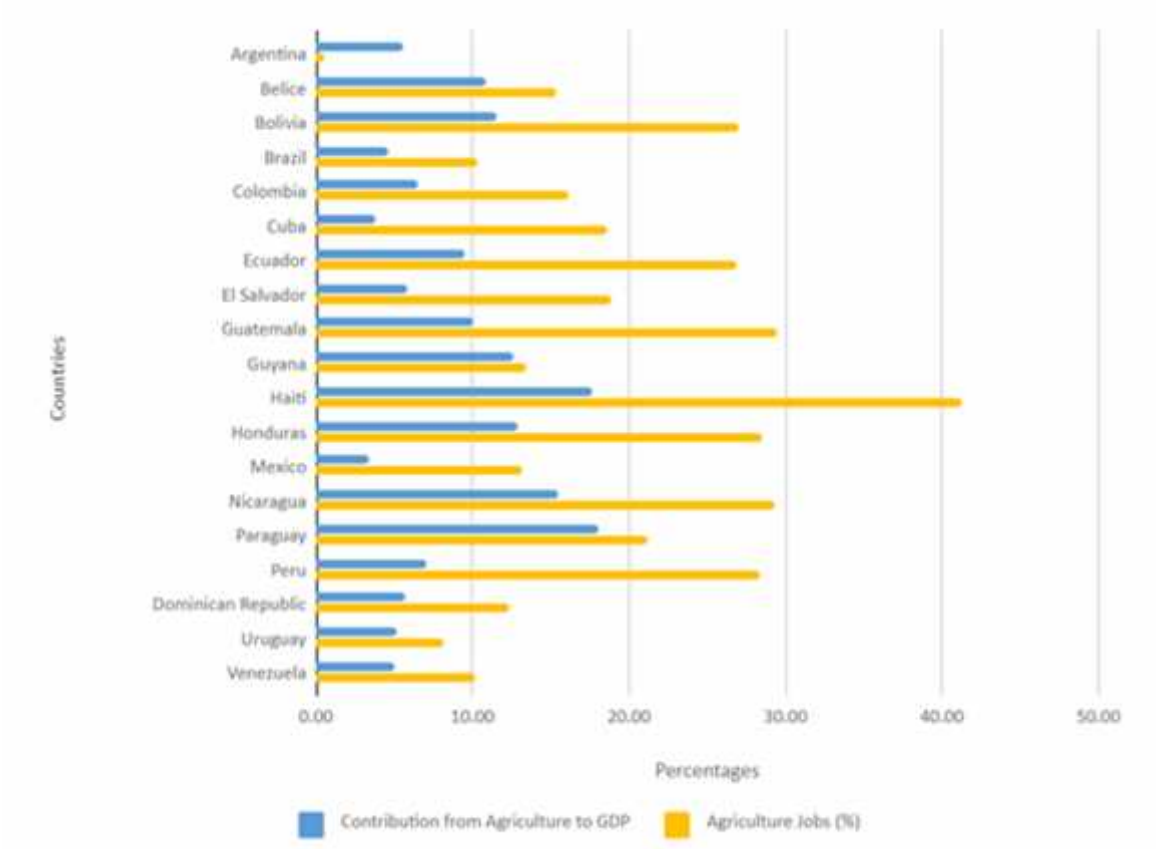
Three patterns of rural youth employment have been identified in a study of 12 LAC countries (ECLAC et al., 2015). They are expressed differently in the various countries: those where family farming work prevails, where NARE prevails, and where a combination of the two previous patterns is observed along with self-employed agricultural work. Barriers for young people exist in each one of these patterns. In family farming, obstacles are observed relating to access to land, both for landowners and for leaseholders with difficulties in accessing credit; in regard to NARE, there is little attention from public policies, which makes successful social integration into this area more challenging; regarding self-employment, a lack of training programmes and infrastructure is identified (ECLAC, 2008). The

[5] There are no data on completion of tertiary education, since these are for the 25- to 29-year-old age group, who fall outside the considered target group (15 to 24 years old).

barriers relating to access to land are of particular interest; it has been determined that they have a profound impact on developing life strategies for rural youth, as well as processes of entrenchment, identity and empowerment (Dirven, 2016).

One of the economic sectors traditionally linked to the rural world is agriculture. However, it has been found that this sector has been losing importance, both in its contribution to the economy and in the number of jobs it creates, as part of a structural transformation process of the rural world (IFAD, 2016). Figure 9 displays the contribution of agriculture to the GDP of each country, as well as the percentage of workers in this production sector.

Figure 9. Latin America (19 countries): contribution of agriculture to GDP (%) and percentage of employment in agriculture, 2017



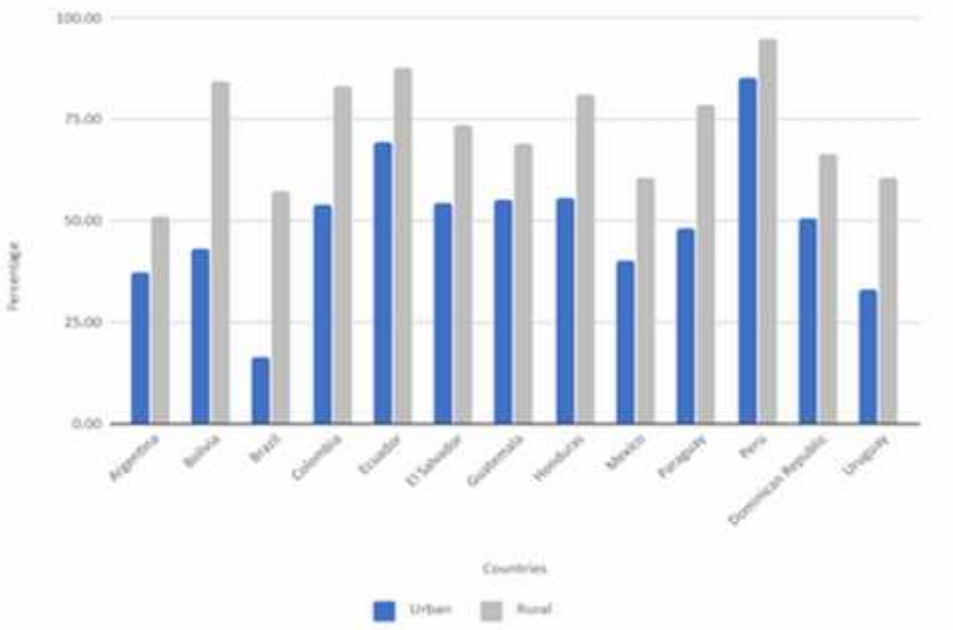
Source: created by the author with data from World Bank (2017).

There are important differences among countries in the contribution of their agricultural sectors to the GDP, it being less than 5 per cent in Mexico, Cuba and Brazil, and closer to 20 per cent in Haiti and Paraguay. In addition, the gaps between this sector's contribution to the GDP and the number of jobs it creates are noteworthy. Particularly, cases such as Peru and Guatemala stand out, where an agricultural sector that contributes less than 10 per cent to the economy generates about 30 per cent of the country's jobs. In this regard, Haiti is seen as the country where the agricultural sector has the most importance, both in GDP contribution and in the total number of jobs it creates.

Rural youth, who are more qualified than their parents, have access to fewer high-productivity job opportunities in their area of residence, where jobs demand lower qualifications and are often seasonal. In regard to areas of employment, agriculture stands out as the main source of employment, with half of the rural youth employment, followed by trade, services and manufacture. However,

differences by gender are observed, men being the ones mostly dedicated to agricultural work (Espejo, 2017). That being said, there was no information available about rural youth employed in agriculture, but it is possible to get approximate figures about young people employed in low-productivity jobs, which mostly correspond to the agricultural sector (Dirven, 2016).

Figure 10. Latin America (13 countries): percentage of population between the ages of 15 and 24 who work in low-productivity jobs, by geographical area, 2014



Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC of ECLAC, with information from household surveys by country.

In all of the countries covered (figure 10), the percentage of young people employed in the low-productivity sector is greater in rural areas, exceeding 50 per cent in all the countries, with cases such as (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras and Peru exceeding 80 per cent. The data also show that, in both geographical areas, young people in the 15- to 19-year-old age group are found in low-productivity jobs more often than the 20- to 24-year-old age group, and, when the figures are broken down by gender, women are found to be more exposed to these types of jobs than men. While these data may contradict the idea that men engage more in agriculture, it is important to note that low-productivity jobs form a broader category that also includes jobs in the informal sector, such as micro-enterprises, domestic employment and unqualified self-employed jobs, which can explain the results with regard to the gender variable.

Rural youth show a trend of earlier labour insertion than their urban counterparts (ECLAC, 2008), with higher rates of participation in economic activity between the ages of 15 and 24. These rates equalize in adulthood (Espejo, 2017). Rates of participation in urban and rural youth are presented in table 6, indicating the economically active population as a percentage of the total population of these age groups.

Table 6. Latin America (12 countries): percentage of the population aged 15 to 24 and 25 to 59 that is economically active, by gender and geographical area, 2014

Country	Urban				Rural			
	15-24		25-59		15-24		25-59	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Bolivia*	46.6	34	s/d	s/d	70.8	60.2	s/d	s/d
Brazil	66	52.8	91	69.9	72.2	39.8	93	66.6
Colombia	60.8	49.2	95.6	75.9	70.8	35.2	96.4	52.9
Dominican Republic	49.4	30.4	90.4	64.3	55.2	22.4	91.3	45.6
Ecuador	48.4	28	96	63.3	64	35.8	97.1	61.7
El Salvador	52.4	33.8	94.5	68.5	74.4	27.8	95.5	44.7
Guatemala	69	36.6	94.7	60.3	81.2	29.4	97.1	36
Honduras*	56.4	36.4	s/d	s/d	84	26.8	s/d	s/d
Mexico	55.8	36.8	95.1	59.9	71.6	35.8	96.3	52.1
Paraguay	64.8	48.2	94.4	71.5	79.4	37.4	95.7	61.9
Peru	58.6	47.4	93.9	73.8	72.2	56.4	97.1	80.3
Uruguay	59.6	46	95.3	79.2	69.2	38.6	97.5	70.6

*Data for 2013.

Source: created by the author based on ECLAC's Household Surveys Database (BADEHOG) (n/d).

It is possible to observe that economic participation among the youth population is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and among men than among women. This tendency is also observed in the older population, but the gap both by geographical area and by gender is smaller. The data indicate that more young people in the country are economically active, which can be associated with a smaller commitment to studying, particularly at tertiary level, a gap that, as previously stated, is wide with respect to the urban youth population. It is interesting to note that economic participation of men (in both age groups) is higher in rural areas in all of the countries considered, a situation which is more heterogeneous in women. This can be related to the high level of participation of young rural women in unpaid domestic activities, as they are considered economically inactive (Ortega, 2012; Díaz and Fernández, 2017). This tendency is modified when transitioning to adulthood, which is reflected in the higher percentages of economic activity among women, both in urban areas and in rural areas in all countries considered.

It is recognized that, in general, young people face worse conditions than adults in terms of precariousness, instability, unemployment and low salaries, with these conditions being accentuated among rural youth (Espejo, 2017). In the literature it is suggested that unemployment is higher among young people than adults, and slightly higher in rural areas than in urban ones (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015). Table 7 shows the differences in unemployment percentage, noting the differences within each geographical area determined by gender and age group.

Table 7. Latin America (15 countries): percentage of unemployed population between the ages of 15 and 24, by gender and geographical area, 2014

Country	Age group	Urban			Rural		
		Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Argentina	**15-19**	6.32	4.3	5.37	4.83	3.54	4.22
	20-24	10.85	9.87	10.37	9.23	8.98	9.11
Bolivia	**15-19**	3.55	3.16	3.35	0.76	1.11	0.93
	20-24	4.38	2.91	3.59	0.47	3.8	2.02
Brazil	**15-19**	10.52	11.03	10.77	4.14	5.27	4.67
	20-24	9.16	11.28	10.23	4.42	6	5.18
Colombia	**15-19**	8.52	8.92	8.72	4.03	5.61	4.75
	20-24	12.23	15.38	13.87	7.58	9.47	8.55
Dominican Republic	**15-19**	6.64	10.71	8.74	11.66	15.11	13.28
	20-24	13.32	22.27	17.81	17.73	23.7	20.33
Ecuador	**15-19**	3.05	3.28	3.17	1.79	1.81	1.8
	20-24	6.69	6.38	6.53	2.72	4.88	3.78
El Salvador	**15-19**	6.6	2.09	4.32	8.49	2.47	5.58
	20-24	13.06	7.55	10.17	10.08	3.9	6.81
Guatemala	**15-19**	4.34	2.16	3.22	1.36	1.11	1.24
	20-24	4.58	3.48	4.01	1.5	2.18	1.86
Honduras	**15-19**	2.9	3.72	3.32	2.6	1.54	2.09
	20-24	8.41	6.08	7.15	2.17	2.67	2.4
Mexico	**15-19**	6.16	2.21	4.2	4.2	1.23	2.72
	20-24	6.53	4.68	5.6	5.38	2.29	3.81
Nicaragua*	**15-19**	8.51	3.91	6.22	5.59	2.05	3.94
	20-24	9.25	7.17	8.14	4.63	2.8	3.78
Paraguay	**15-19**	7.53	6.94	7.22	5.45	3.68	4.56
	20-24	10.45	11.86	11.18	2.24	7.79	4.84
Peru	**15-19**	4.12	4.17	4.15	1.14	0.98	1.07
	20-24	5.09	4.93	5.01	1.91	1.22	1.59
Uruguay	**15-19**	9.17	8.9	9.04	3.05	4.78	3.89
	20-24	10.72	13.17	11.93	4.32	9.57	6.86
Venezuela*	**15-19**	5.83	3.66	4.77	s/d	s/d	s/d
	20-24	9.07	7.52	8.29	n/a	n/a	n/a

* Data for 2013

Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC of ECLAC, with information from household surveys by country.

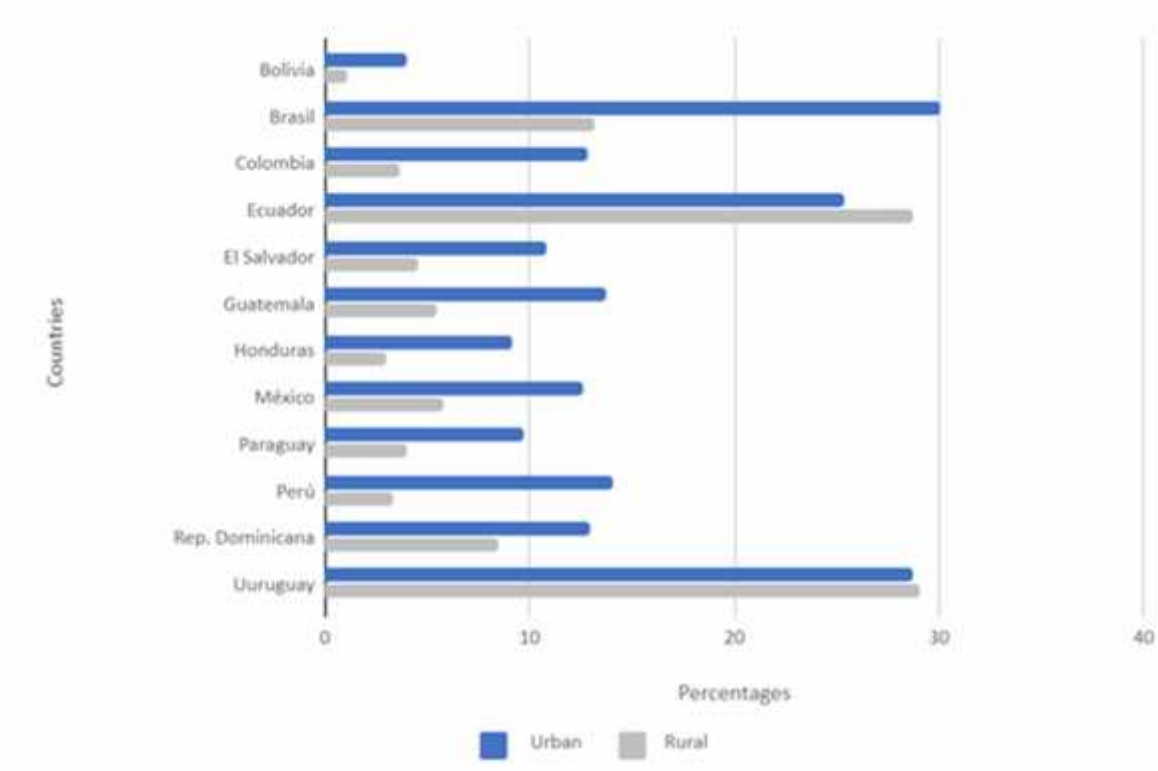
Firstly, it can be observed that, in most countries, unemployment among young people is greater in urban areas than in rural areas, with the exceptions of El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. Of the 15 countries covered, in 11 of them unemployment is greater among men than women in urban areas, while in 9 countries female unemployment is greater than male in rural areas. Furthermore, unemployment is systematically higher among young people between the ages of 20 and 24 than

those between the ages of 15 and 19, although in rural areas the gap between both age groups is smaller than in urban areas.

While the data found may contradict the trends suggested by Trucco and Ullman (2015), caution should be taken with the interpretation, considering that, by the very nature of youth, many find themselves seeking employment for the first time, or are alternating between employment and unemployment (Espejo, 2017). Likewise, the high unemployment rates may be due to continuing longer within the educational system, which is consistent with the high attendance rates in secondary education found in rural youth. The above is understood as being a result of expansionary education policies, as well as low demand for work in the fields, incentivizing young people to continue their education as a strategy for improving their opportunities in the future (ECLAC and ILO, 2012; ECLAC et al., 2015).

With regard to income, although at the beginning of work life (15 to 19 years old) not many differences are observed between rural and urban youth, between the ages of 20 and 24 this gap widens considerably to the detriment of rural youth (Espejo, 2017). In relation to this, it can also be shown that the decent-employment indicators among rural youth indicate that a majority are dissatisfied (Dirven, 2016). A large number of youth with no contract or a temporary contract are in highly physically demanding jobs, with low pay and limited access to social security, which is related to insertion into informal, precarious or seasonal employment.

Figure 11. Latin America (12 countries): percentage of the population aged 15 to 24 registered with social security, by geographical area, 2013-2014



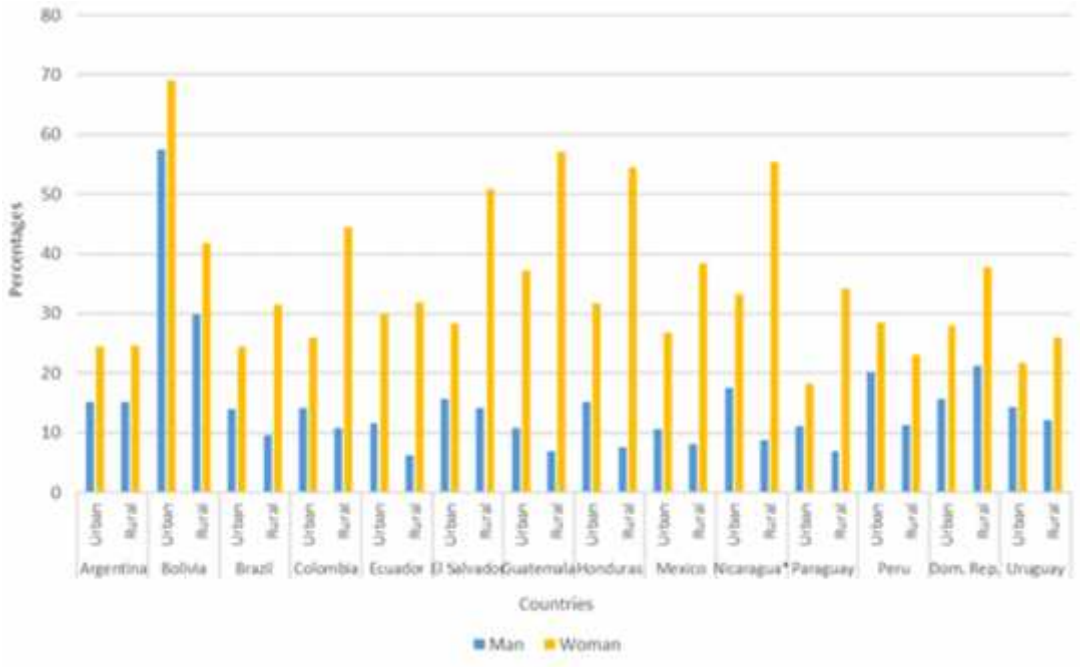
Source: created by the author based on ECLAC's Latin American Youth Observatory (JUVELAC), data from household surveys by country.

In general, low percentages of young people registered with social security are observed (figure 11), whose maximum values come close to 30 per cent of the total number of young people only in countries such as Brazil (urban), Uruguay and Ecuador (both areas). In addition, the findings

emphasize that in 10 out of the 12 countries covered, with the exceptions of Ecuador and Uruguay, rural youth have less access to social security than their urban counterparts. The widest gaps are observed in Colombia, Peru and Brazil.

The last indicator of interest relates to the number of young people not in education, employment or training, which, according to the literature reviewed, has shown an increase in the region, especially in rural areas (Dirven, 2016; Díaz and Fernández, 2017; RIMISP, 2018). Figure 12 shows the differences in this indicator by gender and geographical area.

Figure 12. Latin America (15 countries): percentage of the population aged 15 to 24 not in education, employment or training, by geographical area, 2014



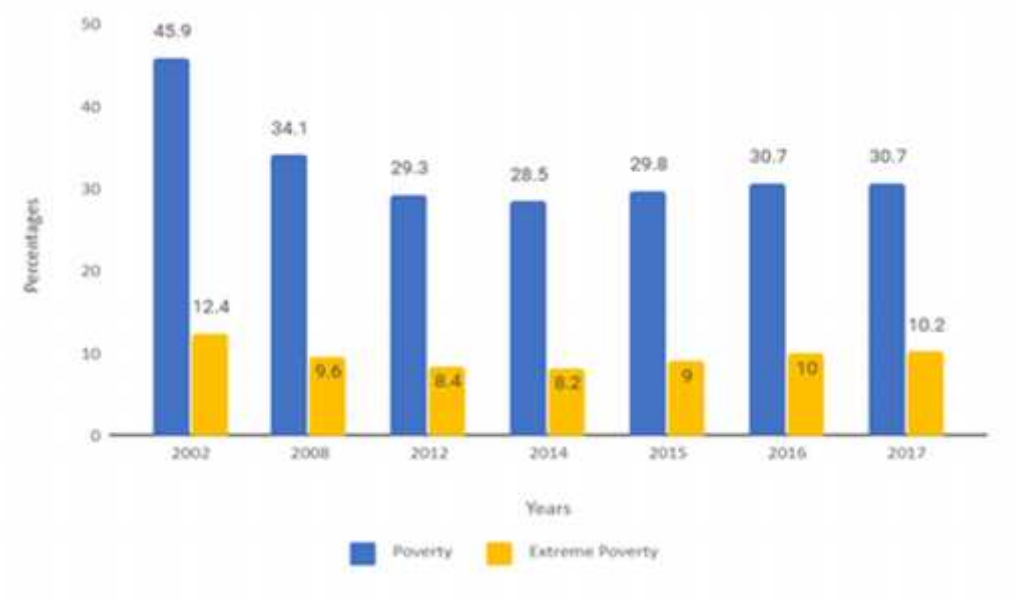
Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC, with information from household surveys by country.

Even though the literature states that the proportion of youth not in education, employment or training is higher in rural areas, by analysing figure 12 we note that this tendency, though prevalent, is not true in all countries. The case of (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia is noteworthy. The country has a high proportion of youth in this category, and those who reside in urban areas are almost twice as many as those in rural areas (64 per cent versus 36 per cent). However, it can be seen that, both in urban areas and in rural areas, women are over-represented among those who are not in education, employment or training. This is more marked in rural areas. This is related to the persistence of a traditional gendered division of work, which implies greater dedication of women to domestic labour and to activities related to unpaid family agriculture (Dirven, 2016; Díaz and Fernández, 2017).

3.3 Poverty

It is recognized that, in the last decade and a half, an important step was made in the reduction of levels of poverty and extreme poverty or indigence, although with large differences between countries (ECLAC, 2018; ECLAC et al., 2015). However, in recent years there has been an increase in the numbers, as can be observed in figure 13.

Figure 13. Latin America (18 countries): percentage of population in poverty and in extreme poverty, 2002-2017



Notes: weighted average of data for Argentina, (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and (the Bolivarian Republic of) Venezuela. The data from 2017 are based on a projection.

Source: ECLAC (2018, p. 88). Based on BADEHOG.

ECLAC's current estimates (2018) show that, between the years 2002 and 2014, poverty and extreme poverty decreased considerably in LAC, although at a faster pace between 2002 and 2008, followed by a more moderate pace between 2008 and 2014. However, starting from 2015 the figures show an increase in overall regional poverty and extreme poverty levels. This is largely due to the socio-political situation that exists in two countries in the region: Brazil and (the Bolivarian Republic of) Venezuela (ECLAC, 2018). In this respect, it should be noted that Argentina's current situation could also have a negative impact on these figures.

Beyond these general trends, a greater incidence of poverty, and particularly extreme poverty, is observed in rural areas, relating to the continuous, wide territorial gaps in access to social welfare (ECLAC, 2008; RIMISP, 2018). The decrease in rural poverty is observed in all of the region's countries, with the greatest decreases observed in rural homes that depend on family farming or agricultural wage employment, although these still show the highest figures for poverty (ECLAC et al., 2013).

Young people constitute a crucial focus group for the reduction of poverty, since they are in the skills development stage, able to be trained in order to stop intergenerational perpetuation (ECLAC, 2008). However, when studying the population by age groups, a high level of youth poverty is identified, higher than among adults (ECLAC, 2018).[6] Thus, looking at both dimensions, rural youth are in a very disadvantaged position, both compared with urban youth and compared with other age groups in the same rural areas. This causes an erosion of the social fabric, as rural youth feel excluded from progress (ECLAC, 2008). Young people are poorer than adults and rural youth are poorer than urban youth. Table 8 shows the percentage of young people who are in positions of poverty and indigence, sorted by geographical area.

[6] Although, of all the age groups, children from 0 to 14 years old are the most affected (ECLAC, 2018).

Table 8. Latin America (10 countries): population aged 15 to 24, and 25 and older, in situations of poverty and extreme poverty by geographical area, 2014

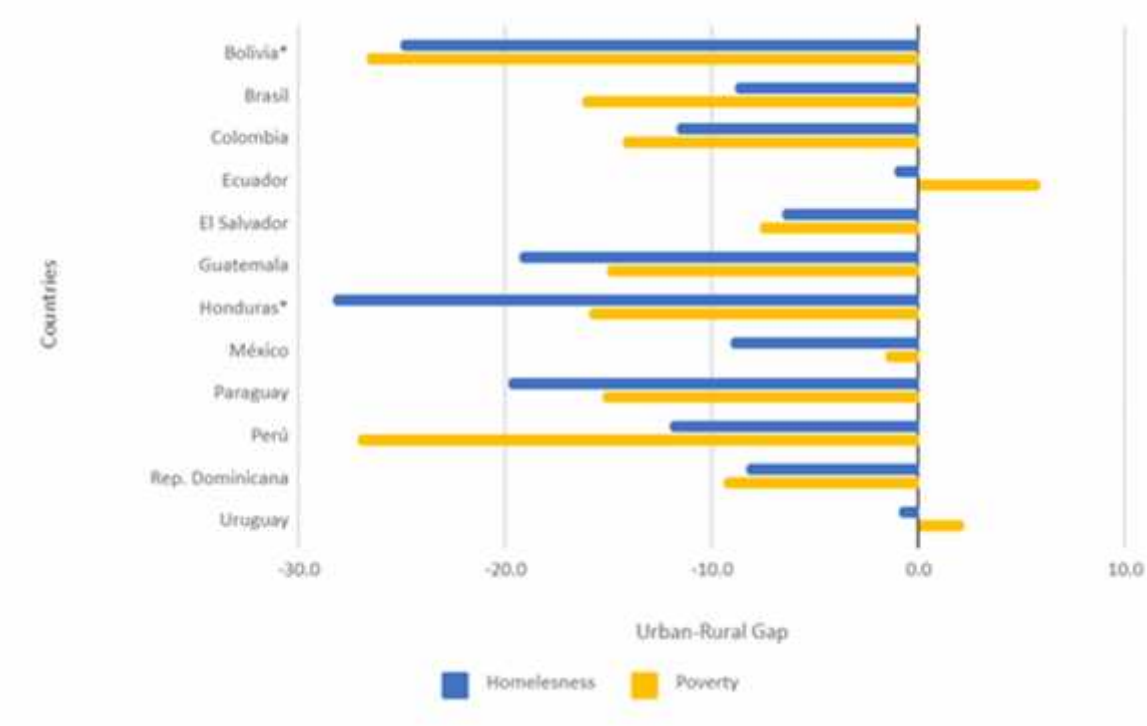
Country	Age	Urban		Rural	
		Extreme poverty	Poverty	Extreme poverty	Poverty
Bolivia*	**15-24**	6.7	22.2	31.8	48.9
	25 and older	5.5	16.5	31.1	49.6
Brazil	**15-24**	3.5	15.9	12.4	32.2
	25 and older	2.2	8.8	7.1	18.4
Colombia	**15-24**	5.0	25.5	16.7	39.8
	25 and older	3.5	18.1	14.2	33.9
Dominican Republic	**15-24**	15.6	35.9	24.0	45.3
	25 and older	12.98	29.2	19.16	38.08
Ecuador	**15-24**	8.9	30.7	10.1	24.8
	25 and older	6.9	23.2	8	21.5
El Salvador	**15-24**	8.7	38.1	15.3	45.8
	25 and older	8	31.3	15	44.1
Mexico	**15-24**	11.4	39.7	20.5	41.3
	25 and older	8.48	30.98	17.36	37.34
Paraguay	**15-24**	11.7	34.8	31.6	50.1
	25 and older	10.42	30.18	25.58	45.1
Peru	**15-24**	0.9	14.4	12.9	41.5
	25 and older	0.74	12.12	11.72	41.14
Uruguay	**15-24**	1.1	6.0	2.1	3.8
	25 and older	0.4	2.4	0.72	1.56

* Data for 2013.

Source: created by the author based on BADEHOG.

The extreme poverty and poverty numbers are higher in rural areas than in urban ones, a tendency that holds when only the youth population is observed. However, there are variations by country, as in the case of Uruguay, where extreme poverty in the youth rural population is below 3 per cent, which contrasts with (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia and Paraguay, where the incidence is higher than 30 per cent; poverty is above 40 per cent in the youth populations of 6 of the 10 countries considered. Likewise, from the data, it can be seen that the percentages of extreme poverty and poverty are higher in the youth population than in the adult population in practically all the countries considered, in both rural and urban areas, with the exception of (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia, where the percentage of poverty among adults residing in rural areas is slightly higher. As a complement, figure 14 shows the gap or existing distance between urban and rural areas with regard to poverty numbers.

Figure 14. Latin America (10 countries): poverty gap by geographical area for the youth and adult population, 2014



*Data for 2013.

Source: own information based on BADEHOG.

The negative numbers indicate that, in general, the incidence of poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, with the exceptions of Ecuador and Uruguay. Likewise, the graph shows that the widest poverty gaps between urban areas and rural areas are in (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia and Peru. When comparing the situations of the youth population and adults it can be seen that, while in some countries such as Brazil, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic the situation is more unfavourable for youth, in other countries the poverty gap is more marked for adults.

One of the aspects that have been defined as critical in regard to young people's living conditions is access to basic services and public goods (Díaz and Fernández, 2017). In RIMISP's research it was determined that, while there have been advances in the coverage of these services in rural areas, significant gaps still exist between urban and rural youth in access to water, electricity and sewage (Díaz and Fernández, 2017).

From the perspective of inequality crossover, it is also important to mention that women, indigenous people and Afro-descendants in rural areas are shown to be in even worse conditions (ECLAC, 2008, 2018; Díaz and Fernández, 2017). It must be taken into account that the methods used to measure incidence of poverty vary widely between countries.[7] Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, regardless of the measurement used, these groups are consistently seen as the most affected. This is covered in greater detail in the following section.

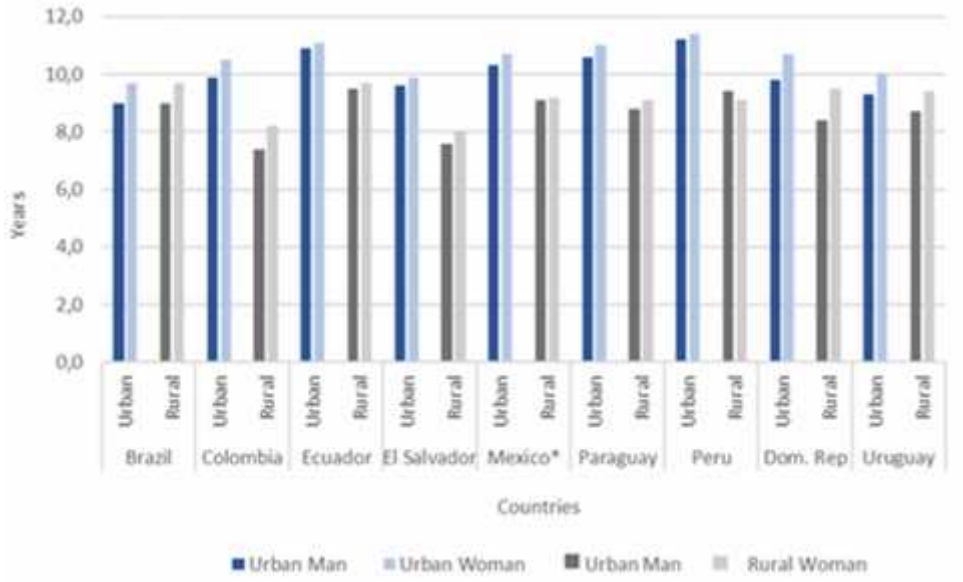
[7] The main ones are measurement of poverty by income (poverty and indigence line) and by unmet basic needs, and to a lesser degree multidimensional methods (Dirven, 2016).

4. Priority groups

4.1 Women

In recent decades, there has been substantial progress in the conditions facing young rural women from LAC, who have demonstrated a greater increase in average years of education than men, becoming "the most educated and trained generation that has existed thus far in this region" (Díaz and Fernández, 2017, p. 13). Next, the average years of education of both men and women in rural and urban areas are compared

Figure 15. Latin America (nine countries): average years of education in the population aged 15 to 24, by gender and geographical area, 2013



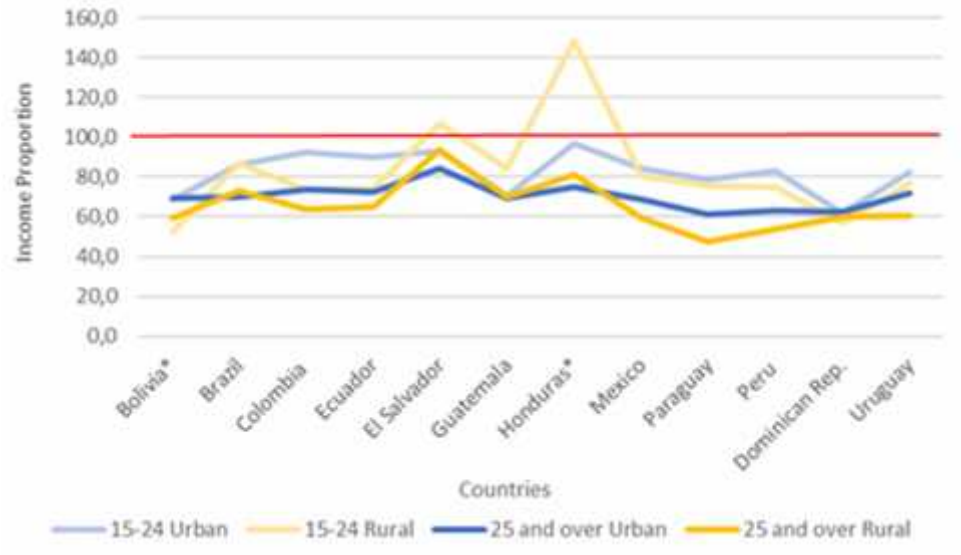
*Data for 2013.

Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC, with information from household surveys by country.

Figure 15 shows that, even if the education gap between urban areas and rural areas is holding, the women in the region have surpassed the men with respect to years of education, in both rural and urban areas, which confirms the tendency found in the literature review. Only in Peru do men show more average years of education than women.

In addition, rural female employment rates have increased more than overall rural employment rates, going hand in hand with the expansion of the non-agricultural sector, allowing more opportunities for young women (ECLAC et al., 2015). Although these advances are acknowledged, continuous gaps relating to gender among rural youth are also identified. In the area of employment, women's employment rates have reached only half of men's, and wage gaps are persistent. Rural women earn only half the income of urban women, and a third of what urban men earn (Espejo, 2017), directly relating to a greater incidence of poverty among them (Díaz and Fernández, 2017). Figure 16 shows the proportion of median income for women compared with the median income for men, considering equal socio-economic characteristics.

Figure 16. Latin America (12 countries): women's income as a proportion of men's, for the youth and adult populations, by geographical area, 2014



*Data for 2013.

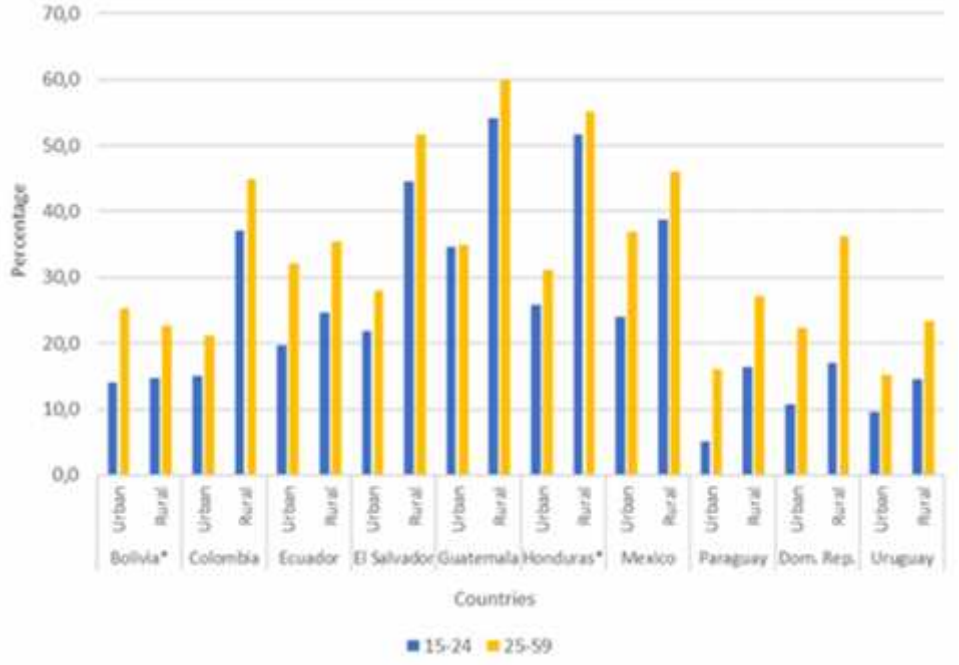
Note: Average income of women versus average income of men with the same characteristics. A value greater than 100 indicates that women receive higher income than men, while a lower value indicates the opposite.

Source: created by the author based on BADEHOG.

The comparison of income between men and women shows the disadvantageous situation faced by the latter. While in urban areas young women are in a worse position than men in all countries, in rural areas there are some exceptions, particularly in El Salvador and Honduras. Despite this, the graph shows a disadvantageous situation for young rural women, a situation that is more marked in countries such as (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia and the Dominican Republic, where their income is barely half of that of men. When comparing the situations of young and adult women, it is observed that the former are in a better position, which could point to the income gap between men and women closing in the younger generations.

In relation to inactivity rates, it was found that young rural women are over-represented in the group not in education, employment or training. This is connected to their commitment to care-giving tasks, domestic work and unpaid family farming, duties traditionally associated with women (Díaz and Fernández, 2017). This is a result of the continuation of gender division of labour and the patriarchal family model in rural areas, characterized by the centralization of power and authority in the male provider figure, while women are forced to stay in a subordinate position and are relegated to the domestic sphere, even if they are also providers (Ortega, 2012). Associated with this, figure 17 compares the percentages of women who are dedicated exclusively to household chores by geographical area.

Figure 17. Latin America (12 countries): percentages of young and adult women dedicated exclusively to household work, by geographical area, 2014



*Data for 2013.

Source: created by the author based on BADEHOG.

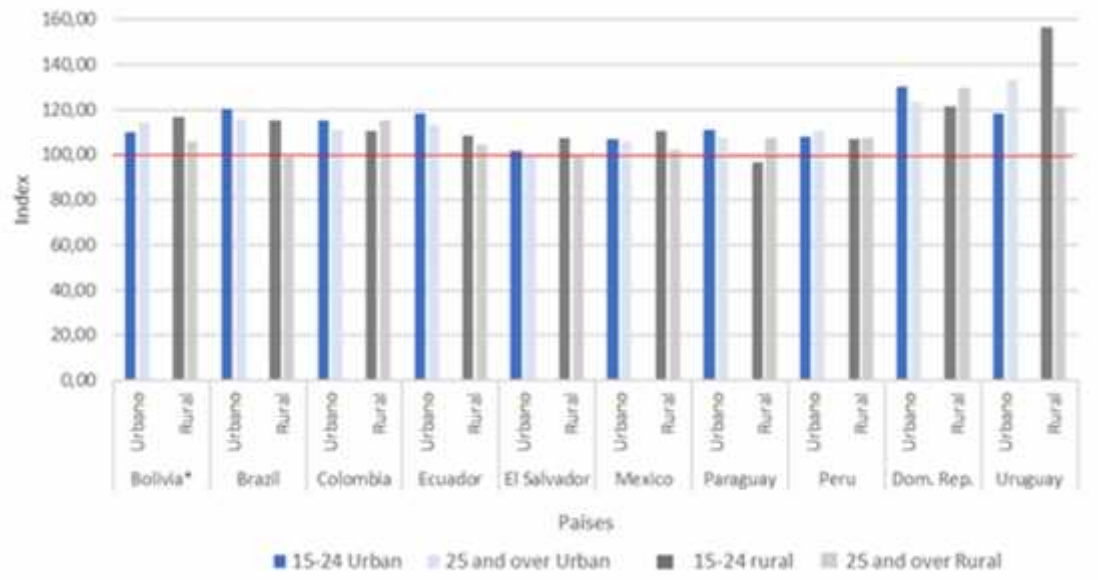
Among women, exclusive dedication to household work is higher in rural areas than in urban areas in practically all of the region's countries. When comparing age groups, it is observed that in all of the countries higher proportions of adult women than younger women are dedicated to household work, showing progress in this matter in the younger generations. However, the situation is still worrying, considering for example rural areas in Guatemala and Honduras, where more than 50 per cent of young women are dedicated exclusively to unpaid household work. This implies multiple negative consequences related to economic dependency, the restriction of social life to the home and the family, and the lack of access to social security and pension systems (Espejo, 2017). With regard to this, a study on the aspirations of rural youth in LAC found that aspirations for wealth and success are significantly lower among women. The authors interpret this as an internalization of gender gaps by these women, who have grown accustomed to their disadvantaged position with regard to occupational and salary opportunities, and to quality of employment (Cazzuffi et al., 2018).

A tendency which is somewhat contradictory to the previous numbers is the rise in female-led households in rural areas, particularly among young women (ECLAC et al., 2015). This is related to the increased youth participation in NARE: "if rural women under the age of 35 found the non-agricultural labor market more favorable, thus encouraging them to establish their own homes, this could explain the increase of female-headed households in this age group" (ECLAC et al., 2015, p. 60). That said, this increase in the number of rural women in the labour market, which undoubtedly brings long-term benefits, raises concern about the heavy workload they face, since, in addition to paid work, they are still committed to domestic work (Ortega, 2012).

The higher inactivity rates and lower salaries among young rural women than among their male peers is related to a higher incidence of poverty among this group, who do not have their own income and, in addition, face difficulties in accessing land, credit, productivity-related public services and the chance to participate in community and productive organizations (Espejo, 2017). Figure 18 shows the

femininity index of poverty, [8] differentiated between urban and rural areas and between youth and adults.

Figure 18. Latin America (10 countries): femininity index of poverty, youth and adults by geographical area, 2014



*Data for 2013.

Source: created by the author based on BADEHOG.

It is observed that, in practically every country, the incidence of poverty is higher in women than in men. Only the rural areas of Brazil, Honduras (25 years and older) and Paraguay (15 to 24 years) present a femininity index of poverty below 100; that is to say, only in these cases are men in worse conditions than women. There are no major differences between urban and rural areas or between youth and adults; however, the femininity index of poverty appears to be slightly higher for young women, particularly for those who reside in rural areas.

There are also specific issues among young rural women, for example high rates of teenage pregnancy compared with young urban women (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015; Díaz and Fernández, 2017).[9] Adolescent motherhood has been associated with the abandonment of educational achievements, intergenerational transmission of poverty and restrictions on young mothers exercising their rights (ECLAC, 2016a). Young rural women also show a pattern of earlier unions and higher incidence of early marriage (before the age of 18), which has been correlated with higher rates of physical and sexual violence between partners (ECLAC, 2016a). With regard to violence in young people, while it has been found that it has a greater effect in urban areas and on men, it is a phenomenon that shows differences by gender. This is because women face a special kind of violence, particularly relationship violence and sexual violence (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015). However, there are limited data on this issue in rural areas (Díaz and Fernández, 2017).

[8] A value above 100 indicates that poverty affects women more than men, while a lower value indicates the opposite. The regional average for the year 2014 for the femininity index of poverty in 18 countries was 121.4, while that of rural poverty was 114.7 in 16 countries (ECLAC, 2014a).
[9] Figures relating to adolescent motherhood are provided in section 5.2, on sexual and reproductive health.

4.2 Indigenous people

It is important to note that in no way are indigenous people homogeneous. On the contrary, they show important differences between and within countries. Nevertheless, they are analysed as a joint category, as they have certain characteristics in common, being identified as one of the most excluded and discriminated populations. Among indigenous people, the percentage of those who live in rural areas is higher than the rest of the population, although with a growing trend towards urban residence. Furthermore, in all the countries of the region, indigenous people display a younger age structure (ECLAC, 2014a) and, among youth, indigenous people show greater levels of poverty (ECLAC, 2008). In that respect, while in the literature it is recognized that indigenous people suffer greater social exclusion and discrimination, no information can be found on the specific situation faced by those who reside in rural areas. Table 9 gives information available on the percentages of indigenous populations in five LAC countries.

Table 9. Latin America (five countries): youth and adult indigenous population by gender and geographical area, 2010

Country	Age group	Men		Women	
		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Brazil	15-24	9.23	9.80	8.63	9.77
	25 and older	4.85	3.05	5.15	2.94
Ecuador	15-24	11.17	9.48	11.58	9.39
	25 and older	4.07	3.35	4.03	3.57
Mexico	15-24	8.87	9.37	8.92	9.53
	25 and older	4.39	3.73	4.60	3.88
Uruguay	15-24	7.48	6.18	6.58	5.72
	25 and older	5.53	5.76	5.96	5.71
Venezuela	15-24	10.46	9.75	10.47	9.96
	25 and older	3.55	3.47	3.80	3.20

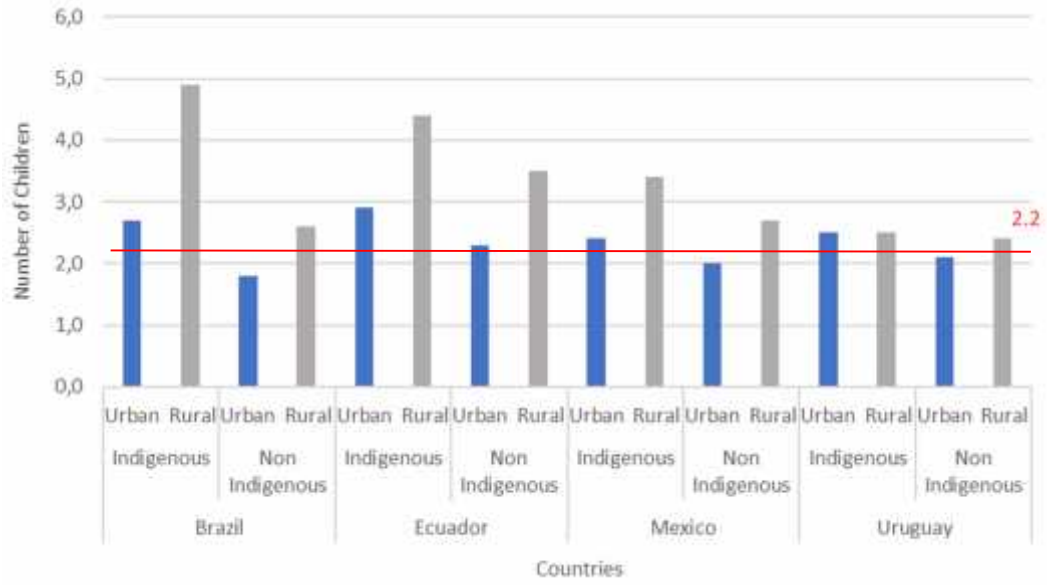
Source: created by the author based on CELADE's System of Sociodemographic Indicators for Indigenous Peoples and Populations (SISPPI), with information from 2010 census data.

Within the five countries considered, the percentage of indigenous population is much higher among youth than among adults, in both rural and urban areas. The indigenous peoples show behaviours differentiated by country and by age group. While in Ecuador, Uruguay and Venezuela the proportion of indigenous population is higher in urban areas, in Brazil and Mexico that is true only of adults, whereas the percentage of indigenous population is higher in rural areas for the youth group. This is related to the process of migration from country to city in search of better opportunities, a phenomenon that, taking into account that most migrants are men and women without children, fragments families and weakens community fabrics in their places of origin. In addition, difficulties have been noted in the process of social integration in their new settings, specifically because of the structural discrimination they face due to their indigenous status (ECLAC, 2014; World Bank, 2015).

Another indicator on which important differences are observed among young indigenous and young non-indigenous people in rural areas is the total fertility rate (figure 19).[10]

[10] Global fertility rate indicates the average number of children a woman in a hypothetical cohort would have, if during was not exposed to mortality risks from birth until the end of her fertile period (ECLAC, n/d).

Figure 19. Latin America (four countries): global fertility rates by geographical area and ethnic origin, 2010



Source: created by the author based on SISPPI, with information from 2010 census data.

Among the four countries considered, the global fertility rate is higher among the indigenous population than among the non-indigenous population, in rural areas and in urban ones. Likewise, a higher global fertility rate can be observed in both populations in rural areas, with the exception of Uruguay's rural indigenous population. The red line shows the original average for the global fertility rate, which is 2.2 (CELADE, 2017),[11] showing that the rural populations (indigenous and non-indigenous) are above this average in all four countries, while the non-indigenous urban population appears under the regional average in three of them. The gaps by geographical area and by ethnic origin vary between the countries. The case of Brazil is especially noteworthy, where fertility in rural areas among indigenous women is practically double that of non-indigenous women.

In addition to the above, health inequalities are found to be determined by ethnic origins. Young indigenous people display worse indicators than young non-indigenous people, as well as greater difficulties in accessing medical care, relating to geographical inaccessibility as well as the linguistic and cultural barriers they face (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015). One issue of concern refers specifically to sexual and reproductive health, especially the accessibility of contraceptives, knowledge of HIV and prevalence of teenage pregnancy. This last point is complex, as it relates to deeply rooted cultural practices of early union and motherhood, minimizing the notion of adolescent motherhood as an issue (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015), whereas the identity role that motherhood plays presents itself as a form of validation and making oneself visible in one's community (Näslund-Hadley and Binstock, 2010).

Regarding other health topics affecting young people, such as mental health and substance abuse, there are limited data to help analyse the situation in indigenous people (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015). However, higher rates of suicide, depression, alcoholism and drug abuse have been documented among young indigenous people (ECLAC, 2014a). These phenomena are related both to poverty and discrimination and to external and internal pressures on indigenous communities, in a setting of rapid social, cultural and territorial changes that are imposed on them and, in some cases, have caused the loss of community-based organizational mechanisms and the weakening of their own institutions (ECLAC, 2014).

[11] Regional average calculated according to the number of women of childbearing age in 2010-2015.

In education, indigenous people in rural areas display worse indicators than their non-indigenous counterparts, in access to education, average years of education and school dropout rates (World Bank, 2015). Table 10 shows the average years of education for both groups.

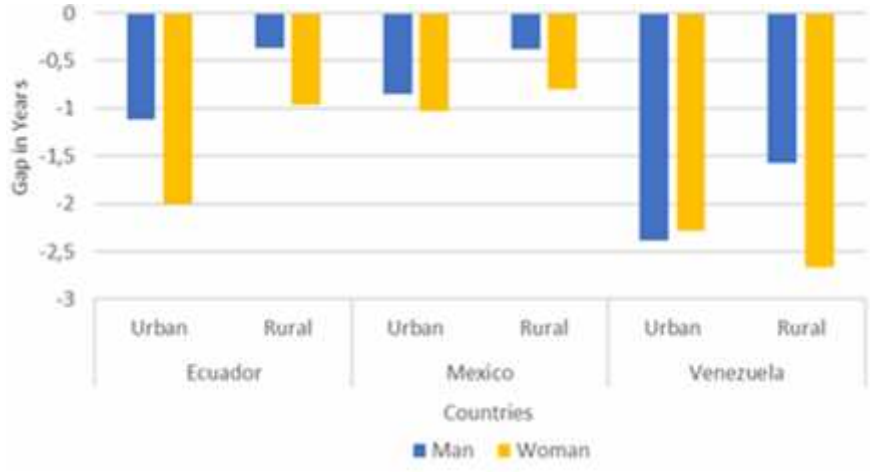
Table 10. Latin America (three countries): average years of education for the population aged 15 to 24 years, by gender, geographical area and ethnic origin, 2010

Country	Area	Indigenous population		Non-indigenous population	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
Ecuador	Urban	12.63	11.78	13.75	13.78
	Rural	11.09	10.48	11.46	11.44
Mexico	Urban	9.08	9.21	9.93	10.24
	Rural	7.99	7.89	8.37	8.69
Venezuela	Urban	7.36	8.24	9.75	10.53
	Rural	6.05	6.37	7.63	9.04

Source: created by the author based on SISPPI, with information from 2010 census data.

Within the three countries considered, the youth population in rural areas have on average fewer years of education than those that live in urban areas and, within the rural youth population, those who belong to an indigenous people show even worse indicators. In figure 20 the education gap between both populations is shown.

Figure 20. Latin America (three countries): education gap between indigenous and non-indigenous youth, by gender and geographical area, 2010



Source: created by the author based on SISPPI, with information from 2010 census data.

Even though the education gaps are negative for the indigenous population in all cases, they are more pronounced in urban sectors and among women. The biggest differences lie in (the Bolivarian Republic of) Venezuela, with a gap of 2.7 years between rural indigenous and non-indigenous women and 2.3 years in the case of men (see figure 20).

In addition, a lack of appropriate formal education is identified in the socio-cultural characteristics and specific needs of this population. This is not only in regard to their cultural institutions and world views, but also relating to linguistic appropriateness. It is desirable that they are able to receive an education in their own language, but that happens only in very isolated cases (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015). Similarly, an undervaluing of ancestral knowledge is found, despite its being pertinent to their everyday lives in rural areas. Thus, while integration into the education system is important to close socio-economical gaps, it can further the process of cultural loss (Dirven, 2016).

Another point that stands out is the loss or weakening of indigenous youth's own culture in the region, mainly indigenous languages. The literature reviewed notes that many young people have adopted Spanish as their mother tongue, diminishing the value of their native languages, which is often linked to cases of discrimination (World Bank, 2015). This acculturation process whereby young rural and indigenous people are attracted to urban and global codes, along with the previously mentioned socio-economic disadvantages they face, creates a gap between aspirations and the actual chances of achieving them (Dirven, 2016).

Regarding social participation, there are tensions between traditional institutions and the aspirations of men and women. For example, there are roles traditionally reserved for older men, so women and younger men are under-represented in leadership roles and in the decision-making processes within their own communities (ECLAC, 2014).

As a final thought, it is questionable whether it is relevant to employ the typical progress and development indicators, such as education and employment, when analysing the particularities of young indigenous groups, as this erases other aspects that make more sense according to their worldviews, such as community recognition, solidarity and reciprocity, as well as landholding and caring for animals (Dirven, 2016).

5. Topics of interest

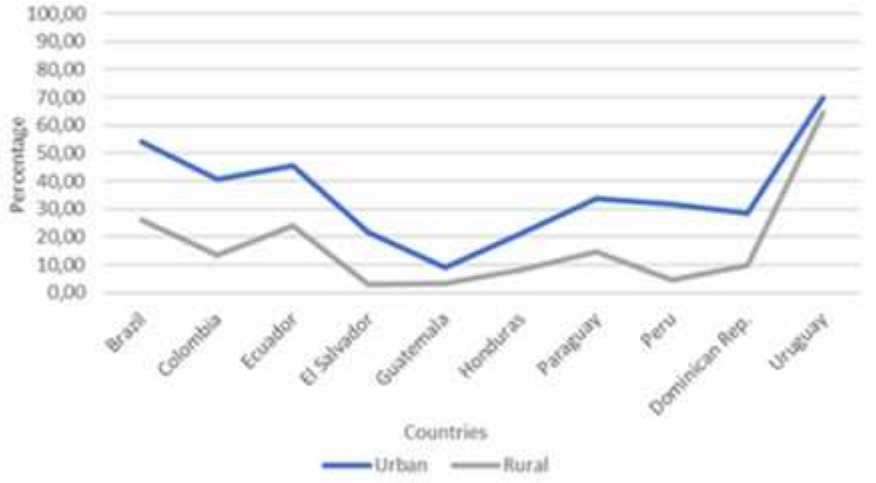
5.1 Use of IT

Information technology is considered a basic skill that represents an opportunity for economic and employment growth, and is a tool for improving school management, the teaching process and learning (ECLAC, 2008). Although the digital infrastructure of countries in the region has shown important advances both in schools and in homes over the last decade, the averages hide differences in access both between countries and within them, between socio-economic groups, and between urban and rural areas, giving an overview of very uneven progress (Sunkel et al., 2013; Jara, 2015; ECLAC, 2016b).

For young people, access to IT is key, both in the areas of education and employment and in connectivity in a globalized world. However, the socio-economic and geographical differences make it difficult to take full advantage of it. Figure 21 illustrates the percentage of homes in each country that have access to a computer, by geographical area, showing the gaps between urban and rural areas.

From figure 21, it is worth noting the considerable heterogeneity between countries, with cases such as Guatemala, where access to a computer is under 10 per cent in both geographical areas. Likewise, it is observed that in all cases access to a computer in homes where youth reside is higher in urban areas than in rural ones. The countries with the widest gaps between geographical areas are Brazil and Colombia, where these reach about 25 percentage points. At the opposite extreme is the case of Uruguay, which shows the narrowest gap and the highest access in the region, over 60 per cent both in both urban and rural areas.

Figure 21. Latin America (10 countries): percentage of the population aged 15 to 24 with access to a computer in their home, by geographical area, 2014



*Data for 2013.

Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC, with information from household surveys by country.

Along with access to a computer, having internet access is key. However, this is limited particularly because of its high cost, especially the cost of broadband (Sunkel et al., 2013). It is worth noting that between the years 2010 and 2015 there was an important rise in this indicator, most sharply in rural areas, which showed a growth of 414 per cent versus 133 per cent in urban areas. Despite this sharp growth in rural areas, their lag with respect to urban areas is close to 20 percentage points (ECLAC, 2016c).

Apart from the general increase in internet access, a high level of heterogeneity is found between the various countries of the region. This heterogeneity reaches the point that the percentages of rural homes with internet access in Costa Rica and Uruguay is higher than the percentages of urban homes with internet access in (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia, Guatemala and El Salvador (ECLAC, 2016b). It is interesting to disaggregate this information by country, considering household income levels.

Table 11. Latin America (11 countries): percentage of population between the ages of 15 and 24 with access to the internet at home, by income quintile and geographical area, 2014

Country	Area	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
Brazil	**Urban**	21.36	37.54	52.16	70.05	88.53
	Rural	4.87	11.47	19.38	39.81	55.23
Colombia	**Urban**	12.08	20.59	37.82	55.48	77.36
	Rural	1.77	3.00	11.05	18.72	32.06
Dominican Republic	**Urban**	13.91	17.96	22.19	32.76	55.70
	Rural	1.98	6.21	6.43	9.92	24.97
Ecuador	**Urban**	19.91	31.27	40.78	58.21	77.72
	Rural	5.98	14.60	19.53	31.14	48.03
El Salvador	**Urban**	1.30	8.10	19.30	26.94	52.79
	Rural	0.19	1.01	1.69	4.38	7.39
Guatemala	**Urban**	0.35	1.42	3.60	8.77	31.70
	Rural	0.00	0.62	1.59	1.98	11.82
Honduras	**Urban**	9.18	10.60	15.01	21.26	49.10
	Rural	0.37	0.71	2.00	10.35	27.75
Mexico	**Urban**	13.56	24.82	31.09	49.21	75.08
	Rural	2.03	5.21	14.06	22.48	38.65
Paraguay	**Urban**	7.69	15.34	32.83	43.23	69.83
	Rural	1.80	8.62	7.23	13.70	41.01
Peru	**Urban**	6.16	15.09	28.12	42.14	66.37
	Rural	0.56	2.03	4.54	5.56	10.09
Uruguay	**Urban**	31.41	58.70	75.93	86.88	95.48
	Rural	28.92	60.83	80.61	68.92	84.15

Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC of ECLAC, with information from household surveys by country.

The differences in internet access, besides the geographical component, are strongly socio-economic in nature, there being a clear gradient from lower to higher access as the household income quintile increases. This can be seen in all of the countries and both geographical areas, although the gaps between countries and areas remain. Moreover, the considerable differences among countries are worth noting, notably Uruguay, where rural homes in the first income quintile have greater access than urban area homes in the same quintile in all the other countries (see table 11).

Ultimately, it is suggested that the inequality in digital capabilities is associated with social, cultural and economic variables. This reflects the fact that, in almost all the countries in the region, internet access in rural primary schools is much lower than in urban schools (Jara, 2015). Furthermore, many schools, especially rural ones, that claim to be connected do not have broadband, which makes it difficult to take advantage of this tool's potential (Hinostroza, 2017). In this regard, the greatest challenge that countries face is continuing to invest in expanding access to both computers and the internet, with the latter contingent upon the coverage of telecommunications infrastructure, which is often non-existent or very costly in rural areas (Jara, 2015).[12]

[12] The exceptions are Uruguay, where there is almost no difference between urban and rural areas, and Costa Rica, where access is greater in rural areas (Jara, 2015).

5.2 Sexual and reproductive health

This topic is particularly relevant to young people in general, and especially rural youth, presenting alarming indicators with regard to teenage pregnancy, access to contraception and prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Fertility rates have dropped steadily in LAC, in contrast to early fertility rates, which are considerably higher than the regional fertility average, second only to Africa[13] (ECLAC, 2008). This is a particular problem in rural areas, where there are higher rates of teenage pregnancies (15 to 19 years old) than in urban areas (Díaz and Fernández, 2017). Sexual and reproductive health is particularly relevant in situations where poverty, school failure and the low expectations placed on the educational system, along with the absence of other life plans, end up reproducing intergenerational poverty (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015).

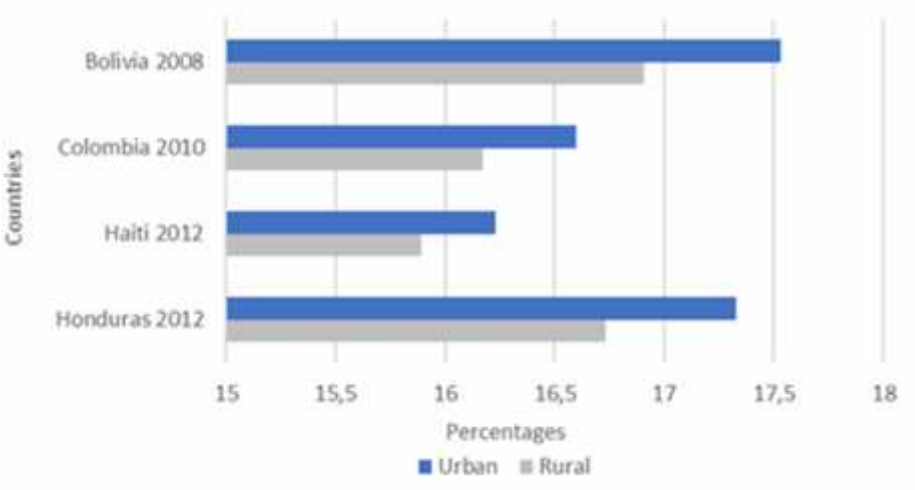
Although in recent decades women have gained power over their sexual and reproductive lives, numerous studies show there is a relationship between structural factors and fertility; the homes (rural or urban) of poor marginalized women have, on average, a greater number of children. In the case of indigenous people, concentrated mainly in rural areas, higher fertility rates are systematically observed, although, as previously mentioned, this analysis should be seen as relative, since inequity factors coexist along with cultures associated with higher reproductive ideals (ECLAC, 2011).

The age of first sexual relationships is a key factor in the design of policies for sexual and reproductive health services, as well as sexual education policies (UNAIDS et al., 2015). Data show that, in 14 LAC countries, one out of every nine women between the ages of 15 and 24 had her first sexual relationship before reaching the age of 15 (Céspedes and Robles, 2016). In this regard, policies promoting methods of female and male contraception, as well as policies focused on universal and responsible sexual education, continue to be essential instruments in increasing awareness and risk prevention among young people and adolescents (ECLAC, 2008).

To that end, recent information[14] was found for four LAC countries, provided by Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) conducted in some of the countries of the region, regarding age of first sexual relationship, an indicator that differs depending on geographical area.

[13] The adolescent fertility rate (number of children born alive for every 1,000 women between ages 15 and 19) in LAC is 68. This number, surpassed only by sub-Saharan Africa, is easily above the world average, which is 45 for every 1,000 (ECLAC, 2014b).
[14] After 2008, taking into consideration the period considered as a reference framework.

Figure 22. Latin America: (four countries): average age for a woman's first sexual relationship, by geographical area



Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC of ECLAC, with information from DHS.

In the four countries considered, rural youth begin their sexual life earlier than urban youth, with a one-year average difference between Haiti, which displays the earliest pattern, and (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia, which displays the latest pattern (see figure 22). It is of vital importance to know the level of access and use of contraceptive methods among young people, as shown in table 12.

Table 12. Latin America (four countries): percentage of female population between the ages of 15 and 24 who use contraceptives, by geographical area and age group

Country and date	Age group	Geographical area	
		Rural	Urban
Bolivia 2008	**15-19 years old**	7.28	7.58
	20-24 years old	26.80	28.95
Colombia 2010	**15-19 years old**	26.67	27.13
	20-24 years old	58.01	59.46
Haiti 2012	**15-19 years old**	4.09	6.89
	20-24 years old	14.91	16.37
Honduras 2012	**15-19 years old**	17.89	15.61
	20-24 years old	45.57	40.73

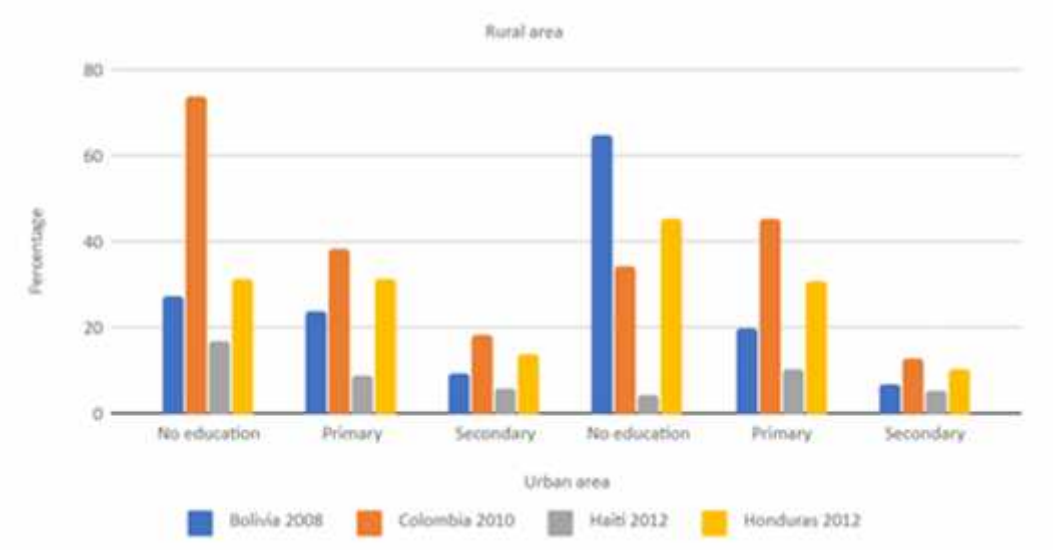
Source: created by the author based on JUVELAC of ECLAC, with information from DHS.

In the four countries considered, there are very different rates for birth control use, with low usage in Haiti and Bolivia, and much higher rates in Honduras and particularly Colombia. Despite these differences, in general, the figures for these countries appear to be low when compared with the regional average for birth control use in women (15-49 years), which is around 82.6 per cent.[15] No great difference is observed between young people from rural and urban areas in the percentage of those who use contraceptives. However, when disaggregating data by age groups, it is observed that young people between the ages of 15 to 19 use them much less often than those between the ages of 20 and 24, a gap found in both rural and urban areas.

[15] UNSD, 2015.

It is interesting to review the teenage maternity numbers (15 to 19 years of age) differentiated by geographical area and educational level (figure 23).

Figure 23. Latin America (four countries): percentage of teenage mothers (15 to 19 years of age) by geographical area and educational level



Source: own data based on JUVELAC, with information from DHS.

There are differences between countries. Colombia appears as the country with the highest percentage of teenage maternity, particularly in rural areas, showing a large gap with respect to the three other countries considered. In regard to differences between geographical areas, no regular pattern is observed for the four countries: while in Colombia and Haiti adolescent motherhood is greater in rural areas, in (the Plurinational State of) Bolivia and Honduras it is the opposite. A factor that does in fact display differences in all four countries is the level of education, defining a gradient that indicates that higher levels of education correlate with fewer adolescent mothers. This trend is observed in both rural and urban areas, the only exception being urban areas in Haiti, where the percentage of adolescents with primary education who are mothers is higher than that of those without an education (see figure 23). This appears to be a contributory factor in the intergenerational reproduction of poverty; the lower-income, less educated population is overly affected by this phenomenon, which is proven to generate social and economic disadvantages (Rodríguez, 2014).

In relation to STIs, the limited data available show that only 30 per cent of young people of the region correctly identify how to prevent sexual transmission of HIV. Poverty, violence, ethnic origin, age, gender (including sexual orientation and gender identity) and place of origin are among other factors that determine acceptance of, and the level of access to, prevention services and medical care for this disease (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015). Furthermore, it is suggested that HIV prevalence tends to be higher in urban areas (ECLAC and PAHO, 2011). Beyond these general data, limited specific information exists regarding prevalence of HIV and other STIs, disaggregated by geographical area, to allow a more in-depth look at the situation of rural youth in the region.

5.3 Violence

In recent years, the progress in youth development and politics in the region has been positive. However, this has been overshadowed by the increase in violence and insecurity rates; seven of the most dangerous countries in the world are located in LAC. This phenomenon, which affects young people as victims or aggressors, results from a combination of risk factors. Among these risk factors are the increase in inequality and exclusion, consequences of armed conflicts, drug trafficking,

migratory and deportation procedures, domestic violence, lack of sense of belonging among young people and institutional disaffiliation (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015).

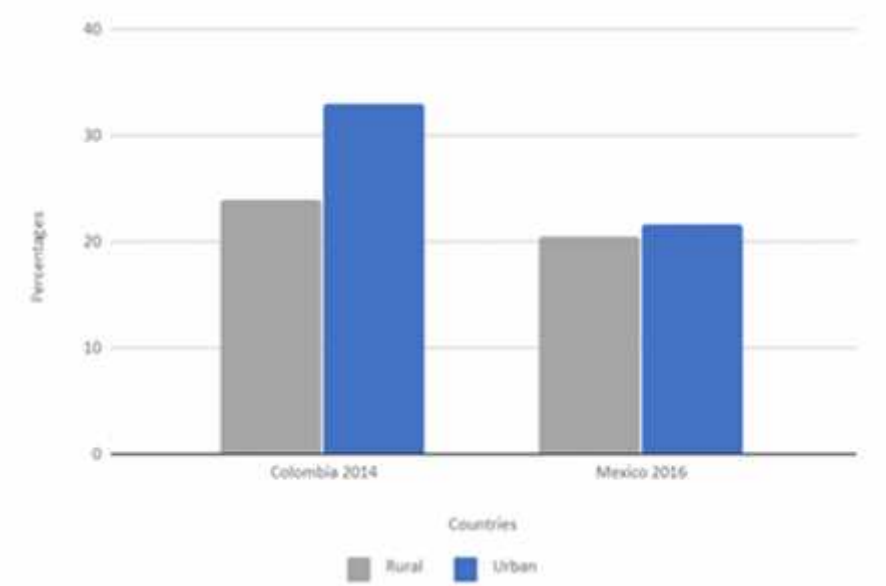
Even though violence is the main cause of death in the LAC youth population, little is known about its relationship with rural youth, since more emphasis is given to urban settings and the emergence of gangs (ECLAC, 2008; Escotto, 2015). This is evidenced by the fact that none of the violence indicators used are usually disaggregated by geographical area (Díaz and Fernández, 2017).[16] Taking this limitation of data into account, the results available allow us to have a point of reference to address this phenomenon.

Based on a study done by the World Bank (2010), it can be observed that the rates of victimization in Central America are lower in rural areas than in urban areas and are practically uniform. This indicates that the variation in victimization between countries at national level is almost entirely based on the differences between urban areas. This said, the results of the assessment done by RIMISP in regard to the realities of Colombia and Mexico deliver relevant information for understanding the youth violence phenomenon (by and towards young people) in rural areas at a regional level. The assessment done on Colombia highlights that the youth victims of armed conflicts (sexual violence and/or forced recruitment) come mainly from rural areas. In regard to Mexico, it is shown that cities are more violent than rural areas, and violence against young people is greater than against the rest of the population. In addition, when analysing the cumulative homicides from 2010 to 2015, it can be observed that the women murdered represent approximately 1 out of every 10 homicides, among young people and the rest of the population, a figure that increases 5 percentage points in young women in rural areas (Díaz and Fernández, 2017).

The following graphs show data from administrative records from Mexico and Colombia that facilitate the understanding of the conditions in which young people in both countries live, differentiated by geographical area, gender and age group. An initial indicator for analysing youth violence is the number of homicides perpetrated against the population between the ages of 15 and 24. From the data analysed for both countries, common points as well as differences can be identified for each case. One point that the countries have in common is the number of homicides of young people by geographical area: of the total number of homicides where the victims were young people, close to 82 per cent occurred in urban areas, while 18 per cent occurred in rural areas, both in Mexico and in Colombia. That said, differentiating by geographical area, it is also of interest to know the total percentage of homicides whose victims were young people.

[16] The Latin America and Caribbean Youth Observatory of ECLAC's Social Development Division uses the following indicators of violence, among others: life satisfaction, number of injury-related deaths (involuntary, intentional or unintentional), mortality from interpersonal violence, victims of a crime. They are not disaggregated by geographical area.

Figure 24. Colombia and Mexico: percentage of homicides in each geographical area whose victims were aged 15 to 24 years



Source: created by the author based on administrative records of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) (2016) for Mexico and the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) (2014) for Colombia.

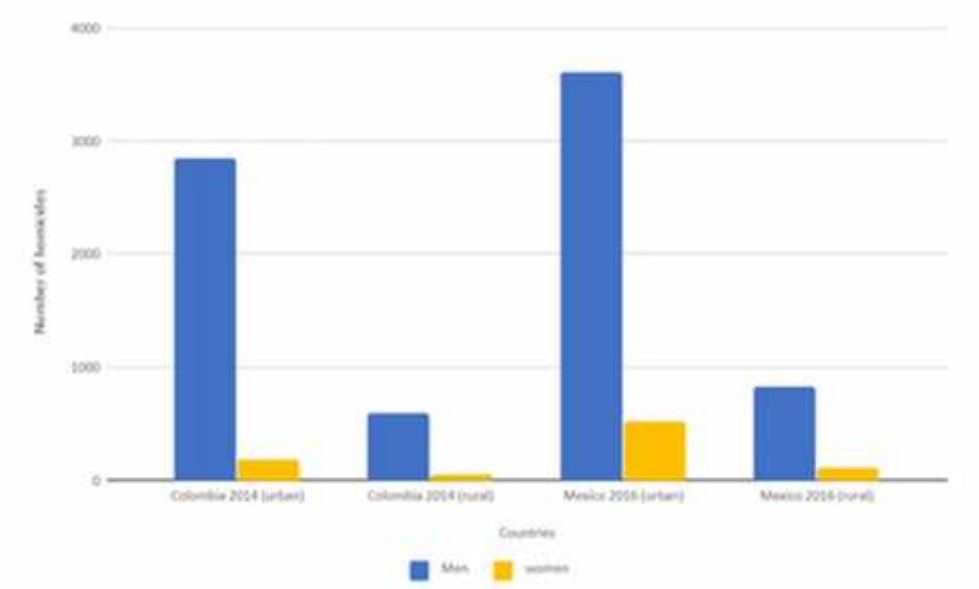
In Mexico, of the total number of homicides that occurred in 2016,[17] 21.3 per cent of the victims were between the ages of 15 and 24. In Colombia this figure increases to 30.9 per cent of the total homicides perpetrated in 2014.[18] When the information is disaggregated by geographical area, it is observed that in Mexico there are no notable differences in the percentage of youth victims between the two geographical areas. However, in Colombia the percentage of youth homicide is much higher in urban areas (33 per cent of all homicides occurring in urban areas) than in rural areas (24 per cent of all homicides occurring in rural areas). In relation to the gender distribution of homicides, it is noteworthy that, in both countries, in both rural and urban areas, homicide victims are mostly male, as can be seen in figure 25.

The absolute number of youth homicides is greater in Mexico than in Colombia. However, when taking into consideration the population sizes of both countries, the situation is reversed. In Colombia, the youth homicide rate was 44.58 for every 100,000 inhabitants, twice as many as in Mexico, 22.14 for every 100,000 inhabitants.[19] As previously mentioned, homicide victims are mostly men, and it is men between the ages of 20 and 24 who are most exposed to this kind of violent death, when compared with the 15- to 19-year-old age group, in both urban and rural areas.

A second indicator of interest for the youth population is suicide rate. This indicator reaches 29.9 suicides for every 100,000 inhabitants in Colombia, and 27.24 in Mexico.[20] The particular distribution of suicides by geographical area and gender is interesting and can be seen in figure 26.

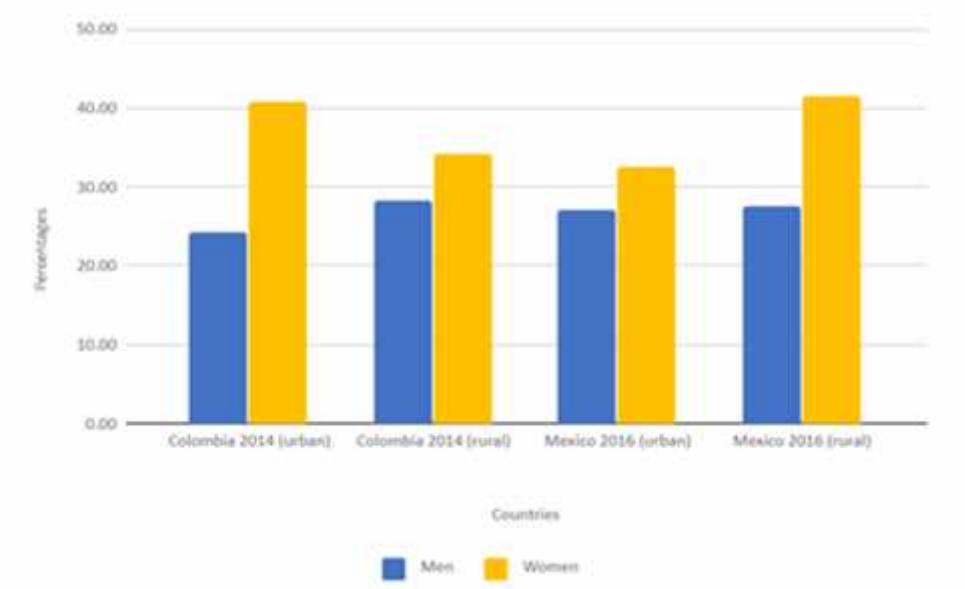
[17] Latest year with complete available data for Mexico at www.inegi.org.mx (in Spanish).
[18] Latest year with complete available data for Colombia at www.dane.gov.co (in Spanish).
[19] The rates are calculated by dividing the number of homicides of people between the ages of 15 and 24 by this age group's total population, according to CEPALSTAT for 2015, and multiplying the result by 100,000.
[20] The rates are calculated by dividing the number of suicides of people between the ages of 15 and 24 by this age group's total population, according to CEPALSTAT for 2015, and multiplying the result by 100,000.

Figure 25. Colombia and Mexico: number of homicides of youth population, by gender and geographical area of occurrence



Source: created by the author based on administrative records from INEGI (2016) and DANE (2014).

Figure 26. Colombia and Mexico: suicides of persons aged 15 to 24, by gender and geographical area



Source: own information based on administrative records from INEGI (2016) and DANE (2014).

In 2014 in Colombia, of the total number of suicides in urban areas, 27.4 per cent were by young people, while in rural areas 29.2 per cent of suicides were by young people. For the year 2016 in Mexico, we can find similar numbers, with 28.2 per cent of all suicides in urban areas by young people, a number that reaches 29.9 per cent in rural areas. When disaggregated by gender, an interesting pattern emerges. In absolute terms, suicides of young men greatly outnumber suicides of young

women.[21] In relative terms, when considering the total number of suicides in both countries, the proportion of young women who die by suicide is much higher than that of men.

5.4 Social and political participation

In the majority of the countries in the region, institutions address youth from a mainly urban perspective, making rural youth invisible, which results in them being marginalized in the design and execution of different initiatives, and limited in their full exercise of citizenship (IICA, 2017; Dirven, 2010). Moreover, participation in decision-making is often conditional on membership of organizations, which is at a low level among rural youth, which influences their living conditions (IICA, 2017).

Here, it is necessary to understand rural youth from a comprehensive approach, as political subjects, thus maximizing the conception of citizenship (OIJ, 2017). Recent efforts in this matter show that youth participation is focused on communal-territorial topics, ethnic issues, and the possibilities of having access to information and training, among other things. To that end, the Latin American Network of Rural Youth (RELAJUR) suggests that rural youth groups can be characterized into three main types:

- autonomous groups: local, small, with their own scarce resources, intermittent in their actions and existence, mobilized around very specific and communal objectives;
- institutionalized groups: instigated, subsidized and coordinated by NGOs and political institutions, among others, mobilized around specific and exclusive issues;
- dependent groups: belonging to adult organizations that address youth issues, so their resources are negotiated on an internal level and they tend to emulate adult organizations, whether of farmers, producers, communities or others (ECLAC, 2008).

It is important to note that collective action by rural youth mainly focuses on protection processes for land and the environment, and on the provision of basic needs for its care and protection. With regard to political participation, disaffection towards political systems stands out, especially towards traditional political parties (OIJ, 2017). Although these overall trends are recognized, it is important to mention that the available information on youth participation disaggregated by geographical area is very scarce. Thus, it is not possible to present data that allow us to investigate the participation of rural youth in greater depth.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

From the results presented in this article, it is possible to say that rural youth in Latin American countries are in no way a homogeneous group, which is why it is more appropriate to speak of youths in the plural. However, this group possesses certain communal characteristics that differentiate it both from urban youth and from the adult rural population.

In general, it is observed that rural youth in the region face important disadvantages, with levels of poverty higher than those of rural adults, as well as urban youth. Thus, rural youth constitute an especially vulnerable group, a situation which is aggravated in the cases of women, indigenous people and Afro-descendants. In terms of education, even if the gap between rural and urban areas has been closing, it is still there, evidenced by worse indicators, in terms of years of education, finishing rate, attendance and access to tertiary education. On the labour level, rural youth are inserted into the job market earlier than their urban peers and enter low-productivity jobs at a higher rate, with lower income

[21] Colombia: 513 male suicides and 175 female suicides aged from 15 to 24 years. Mexico: 1,380 male suicides and 396 female suicides from 15 to 24 years.

and less social security coverage. Important gaps with respect to access to technology are also observed, with delayed access to computers and the internet.

Rural areas continue to be expulsion poles for the population, as they present no opportunities for development. This is reflected by large migratory movements from rural to urban areas, mainly by young people. This is confirmed when observing the demographic composition of the rural population in practically all of the region's countries, where the percentage of youth population with respect to the total population is lower than in urban areas.

With respect to young rural women, an interesting phenomenon can be identified. First, the advances that this group has shown in the last decade must be noted, particularly in the areas of education and labour insertion, entering the non-agricultural rural job market in strength. Despite these improvements, gender gaps are persistent, especially with regard to levels of poverty, unemployment and salary gaps. Likewise, there is a high rate of young rural women dedicated exclusively to household work and to unpaid family agriculture, a problem that has not been attacked adequately in the region's countries, as they are made invisible within the group of young women who are not in education, employment or training.

Another problem faced by this population group is related to the high rates of teenage pregnancy, particularly among the indigenous population, limited access to modern contraception methods and lack of information about STI prevention. These and other interesting phenomena, such as violence, and social and political participation processes, could not be treated in the desired depth, mainly for lack of available data.

Despite their importance, youth in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly rural young populations, have not been awarded the attention and importance they deserve, both in terms of specific knowledge of their living conditions and aspirations, and in the formulation of public policies that guarantee their rights, maximize their capacities and recognize them as subjects of productive social and political change.

From this perspective, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Actively promote the inclusion of a young people approach in the formulation of all public policies, programmes and activities aimed at the development of rural areas.
- Insist on the need for a focus on youth populations (plural) to emphasize the importance of awareness of the growing diversity and complexity of rural youth populations in LAC.
- Launch concrete initiatives to gradually but steadily overcome the limitations in timely, sufficient, relevant and disaggregated information on the specific reality of rural youth populations in LAC.
- Introduce a focus on closing the structural gaps (social and spatial) in the analysis of the rural territorial dynamics, to promote a developmental style and a set of public policies that allow rural youth to find real opportunities for fulfilment and well-being in their place of origin, mitigate migration pressures and balance the accelerated ageing process of rural populations stemming from youth migrations.
- Pay particular attention to the new economic, social and political role and weight that young rural women are beginning to play. Adapt norms, policies and institutions to this new and promising trend, which can allow, from a gender and substantive equality approach, the release of women's productive abilities, offering them new development opportunities, and fully recognize them as agents of change.
- Recognize the importance and implications of the increasing proportion of indigenous peoples (and to a certain extent also Afro-descendants) in the rural populations in LAC and incorporate a territorial and collective rights approach in all public policies, programmes and

activities aimed at these populations and territories. In this sense, the development of incentives specifically aimed at rural youth from indigenous communities is particularly relevant.

- Favour research agendas and knowledge generation that emphasize the implications for young people of, among other matters, the new rurality in LAC, the complex territorial interaction, particularly between rural and urban areas, the widespread use of IT, the phenomenon of violence, the transformation of gender roles, territorial claims and rights of indigenous people, and the persistence of social and spatial gaps.

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