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Research Article

Family change in Latin America: schooling and labor market implications for children and women

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates major family transformations across Latin American and Caribbean countries and examines their implications for children's schooling outcomes and women's labor force participation. We draw upon harmonized census microdata from 25 countries from the 1950s until the present, from the Integrated Public-use Microdata Series International. Latin America and Caribbean families have experienced profound transformations in recent decades, including dramatic declines in fertility, increases in cohabitation, union dissolution and single motherhood. Findings underscore the strong associations between family context and children's educational outcome, with children from married couples performing the highest levels of attendance and progress, followed by those in single-mother households. Regarding women's labor force participation, single mothers are more likely to participate in the labor market than any other women.

Key words: family context; women; children; education; labor market; Latin America; Caribbean

Introduction

This research provides an account of the major family transformations that occurred in recent decades across Latin American and Caribbean countries and examines the implications of such transformations for children's school attendance and progress and women's labor force participation. Latin American and Caribbean families and households have undergone substantial changes in recent years while keeping some of their distinctive features unchanged (Juárez and Gayet, 2014; Esteve and Florez–Paredes, 2018a; Esteve et al., 2022). The family context in which children are raised has experienced profound transformations. We refer to *family context* as the combination of the mother's marital status and the type of households in which children reside. These data is available at the Integrated Public-use Microdata Series International (IPUMS) (Minnesota Population Center, 2020). We use data from 25 countries based on the most recent census microdata and, in some instances, historical samples dating back to the late 1950s.

This study is organized as follows. First, we document family changes in Latin America and the Caribbean from both the mother's and child's perspectives. To illustrate these trends, we focus on women aged 25 to 29 and children aged 7 to 16. These groups offer a reliable overview of major transformations with the advantage of avoiding overlapping cohorts when data are analyzed over time. For women, most of them have already formed a union and completed their education by age 25–29. We also examine variations by educational attainment. Second, we focus on the associations between family context and children's school attendance and progress, and women's participation in the labor market. In the absence of tailored indicators about progress in cognitive and non-cognitive skills, school attendance and progress are standard indicators of early human capital accumulation available in censuses (UNESCO, 2022). We consider the relationship between family contexts and children's outcomes and women's labor force participation as mere associations. Our analysis examines these two outcomes among children included in the IPUMS-I census samples. For women, we investigate the degree of participation in the labor market. We cannot investigate the mechanisms and causal relationships that produce such outcomes. To strengthen our interpretation, we rely on existing studies with causality-oriented designs and discuss the potential linkages among family structures, women's labor force participation and children's well-being (Amador and Bernal, 2012; DeRose et al., 2017; Reynolds et al., 2018).

Family change in Latin America

Families are the essential building blocks of human societies, playing a crucial role in social, cultural, and economic reproduction. For most individuals, primary socialization occurs within families and individuals often depend on them for fundamental

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processes of human capital accumulation and insertion into society. Despite these general and universal claims, families and households adopt multiple forms across societies and social groups (Goode, 1963; Todd, 1985; Goody, 1996; Bongaarts, 2001; Lloyd, 2005; Carmichael and Rijpma, 2017). Historically, our knowledge of how families in Latin America and the Caribbean have evolved has been limited due to the scarcity of data (see for instance Goode, 1963). However, the recent release of comparative microdata has motivated the proliferation of studies (Lloyd, 2005; García and de Oliveira, 2011; Esteve and Florez-Paredes, 2018a; Pesando and GFC team., 2019; Pesando et al., 2021).

Based on these data, Latin American and Caribbean families and households stand for various unique features closely connected to the region's stratification systems (Cienfuegos and Therborn, 2022). These features include divergent transition patterns to union formation and childbearing by social class. Whereas women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds transition to motherhood during their teenage and early adulthood, upper-class women tend to postpone motherhood (Castro Torres, 2021; Lima et al., 2021). These divergent patterns are linked to high levels of economic inequality, particularly income inequality in the region (Arriagada, 2002; Ariza and De Oliveira, 2007; Casterline and Mendoza, 2009; Williamson, 2010; Castro Torres et al., 2022). Likewise, among lower socioeconomic status groups, transitions to partnership formation and parenthood are not necessarily concomitant with leaving the parental home. It is quite common to live with a partner and children in the parental home (Ward et al., 2015). The region is also characterized by the historical presence of unmarried cohabitation and its recent boom (Castro-Martin, 2002; Quilodrán, 2004; Esteve et al., 2012a; Covre-Sussai et al., 2015; Laplante et al., 2018). This practice is now spreading across all social classes, although it remains more prevalent among the lowest strata of society. Couples, especially those cohabiting, are characterized by high levels of instability, often resulting in single mothers raising their children within extended households. Family co-residence, in these cases, results functional to the needs of young single mothers and their children (Goldman, 1981; Esteve et al., 2012b; Ruiz-Vallejo and Solsona i Pairó, 2020; Reynolds and Cakouros, 2022).

These patterns have strongly interacted with social class as well as with ethnic and racial backgrounds. Latin America and the Caribbean societies are far from being racially and ethnically homogeneous, partly due to centuries of European colonization (Livi Bacci, 2008; Cienfuegos and Therborn, 2022). Indigenous groups and afro-descendants represent a substantial portion of Latin America and the Caribbean's total population (Hooker, 2005). According to recent World Bank reports, Afro-descendants account for ~24% of the total (133 million), however, unevenly distributed. Only Brazil and Venezuela concentrate more than 90%, followed by Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador and Mexico (Freire et al., 2018). Alongside, out of the more than 42 million Indigenous people, which accounts for around 8% of the region's total population, ~80% are concentrated in countries like Mexico, Guatemala, Peru and Bolivia (World Bank, 2015).

A recent summary of trends and literature on Latin America and the Caribbean family patterns has set the overview of the major family transformations in the region, highlighting commonalities, singularities, and variations across social groups (Esteve et al., 2022). Three defining features emerge from many research papers. First, a system of rigid social stratification with limited intergenerational social mobility (Williamson, 2010; Torche, 2014) as class-specific family ethoses are shaped by the divergent material living conditions of socially privileged and socially disadvantaged people. Second, the expansion of educational attainment in the region has not occurred as in other parts of the world, such as Europe or Southeast Asia, and continues to be strongly elitist (Ferreyra et al., 2017; Sánchez-Ancochea, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). The underlying culture of democratization of access to education has not taken place in higher education. Third, informality in the housing and labor markets has greatly influenced household structure and family formation patterns (Gasparini and Tornarolli, 2009; Liu et al., 2023). Access to marriage and independent housing from parents is strongly stratified by social class. Levels of informality in unions are more common among the lower strata, who do not usually delay union formation or the arrival of children, but tend to do so while remaining in the parental home. Naturally, the intensity of these practices varies by country. (Juárez and Gayet, 2014; Giorguli Saucedo, 2016; Solís, 2016; Pesando et al., 2021).

Fertility, union formation and the family status of mothers

Demographers condense the intensity of childbearing in a given year with the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) (Bongaarts and Potter, 1983). Figure 1 summarizes three decades of changes in fertility using two indicators: the total fertility rate (left panel) and the proportion of women aged 25–29 living with children (right panel). The first is an indicator of intensity, and the second is an indicator of timing. Fertility data have been gathered and harmonized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Fertility in Latin America and the Caribbean has been steadily declining since 1960 in the 25 countries shown in the plot. However, there are significant differences in the level and pace of the decline. A ranking of countries' TFRs will put Central American countries at the top (e.g. Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras) and Southern Cone countries at the bottom (e.g. Brazil, Chile, Uruguay). We highlight the trajectory of the three largest countries in the region: Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia. All three are now close to or below the so-called replacement fertility level (2.1). Other countries in the region have already crossed this threshold (e.g. Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Uruguay), and the United Nations forecasts predict that low fertility will spread throughout the entire region in the next two decades (United Nations, 2022). Despite the widespread decline in fertility, many Latin American and Caribbean countries' populations may continue to grow during the following decades due to their relatively young populations, although this will not prevent progressive population aging.

One way to examine the causes of fertility change is through its proximate determinants, i.e. the necessary conditions for births to occur in a population (Bongaarts and Potter, 1983). These determinants include marriage or couple formation rates, the length of postpartum sterility, abortion rates, the frequency of sexual intercourse among couples, fecundity levels, and the prevalence of contraception. Data limitation often prevents a full account of the roles of proximate determinants in fertility change. For Latin America and the Caribbean, scholars highlight the importance of the spread of contraception (Bronfman et al., 1986; Casterline and Mendoza, 2009; Castanheira and Kohler, 2017) and in particular the State-led sterilization strategies during the fertility transition (Caetano and Potter, 2004; Carranza Ko, 2020). Other drivers, such as educational expansion and changing preferences toward small families, have also been highlighted (Castro-Martín and Juarez, 1995; Ferrara et al., 2012).

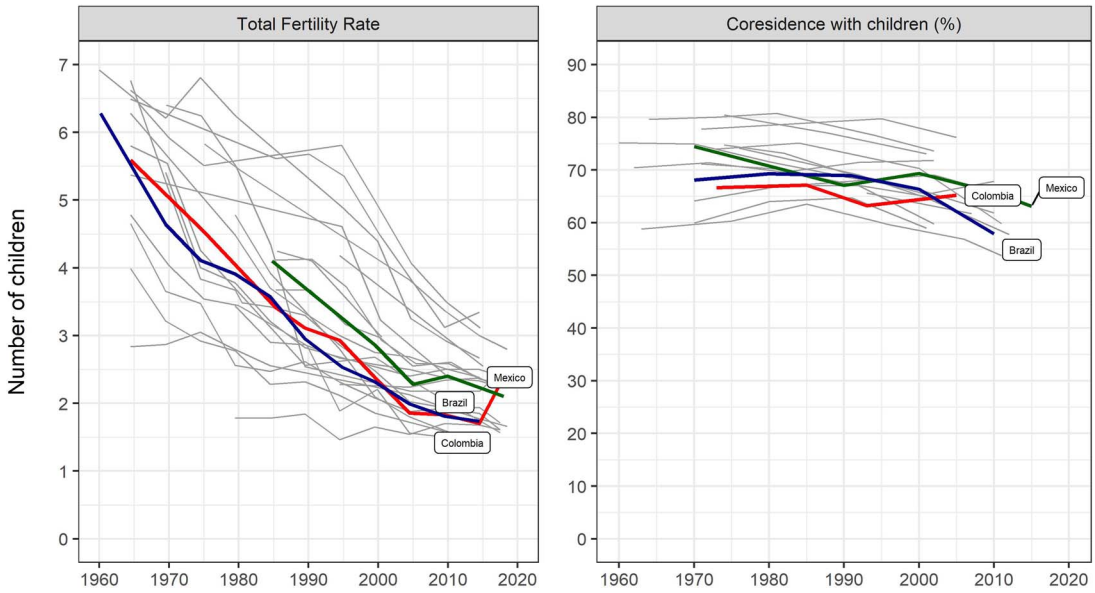

Figure 1: Trends in total fertility and co-residence with children among women 25–29 across Latin American countries.
Source: Left panel—filtered by authors from the ECLAC (https://statistics.cepal.org/). Details about the countries represented in the paper are shown in Appendix 1. Details about Total fertility rate by sample are shown in Appendix 2. Right panel—authors' calculations based on samples from IPUMS international

In other parts of the world, fertility declines of similar intensity have been accompanied by a postponement of age at first child. Fewer and later children are hallmarks of fertility in Western countries (Sobotka, 2004). In Latin America and the Caribbean, however, we observe a relatively stable early pattern of childbearing closely connected to early union formation (Castro-Martín and Juarez, 1995; Esteve and Florez-Paredes, 2018b). Several articles have documented these singular trends by analyzing Demographic and Health Surveys and Census microdata on union formation and fertility (Lloyd, 2005; Guzmán et al., 2006; Bongaarts et al., 2017). The right panel in Fig. 1 provides evidence of this stability by showing the percentage of women aged 25–29 who co-reside with their children. This information comes directly from population censuses of 17 countries, spanning from 1960 to the most recent census available in IPUMS. Unfortunately, the 2020 census round of data is not yet available in IPUMS. The overall picture is that of stability, with a slight tendency to decline. Depending on the country, between 54% and 81% of women 25–29 co-reside with children.

The stability in the age at union formation and childbearing hides many other transformations. Regarding the nature of unions, the most extraordinary shift has been the rise of unmarried cohabitation in the region and the decline of marriage. Non-marital cohabitation in Latin America has been present since colonial times as a substitute for marriage among the lower social classes (Castro-Martin, 2002; Quilodrán, 2004; Lesthaeghe, 2020). The prevalence of cohabitation varies across and within countries (Esteve and Lesthaeghe, 2016). Regional differences in cohabitation are linked to the ethnic and religious mix of the different regions in Latin America and the Caribbean. A social-class gradient exists in which women and men with a lower level of education and black or Indigenous backgrounds have a much higher propensity to form cohabitation than marriage. The interaction of these categories with the intensity of religiousness and the influence of the catholic and newly established evangelical churches also contributes to this explanation (Esteve and Lesthaeghe, 2016).

The expansion of cohabitation has taken place across all regions and social strata while keeping the socio-economic gradients and regional variations in cohabitation intact. Whether the rise in cohabitation is an early manifestation of the second demographic transition or a response to existing constraints and material difficulties is a matter of debate (Lesthaeghe, 2014; Covre-Sussai et al., 2015; Pérez Amador, 2016). Cohabitating couples have been historically less stable than married ones (Goldman, 1981). Recent data for Colombia suggest that this pattern persists in a context of increasing union instability across all union types (Esteve et al., 2022). As a result of early childbearing and union formation, higher cohabitation and union dissolution, an increasing number of women raise their children without the presence of a male partner (Laplante et al., 2018).

These family patterns might have implications for child development. Compared to Western societies, the literature on the implications of family structure for children is less developed. Previous studies indicate that children who experienced parental separation display worse cognitive outcomes in Chile compared to those who did not (Reynolds, 2022). As a unique feature of Latin American and Caribbean countries, a large proportion of single mothers co-reside with other relatives in an extended household (Esteve et al., 2012b), which invites consideration of the family context in a comprehensive way, including grandparents and other relatives (Reynolds et al., 2018). Early union formation and childbearing usually imply young grandparents. Extended families are pivotal in providing shelter and support to unpartnered mothers.

Figure 2 illustrates the aforementioned family trends from the perspective of mothers aged 25–29. We depict the percentage of women mothers in different family statuses. Family status is defined by a combination of marital status, union type, and household composition. The final classification results in four groups: married mother, cohabitating mother, single mother in nuclear household, and single mother in extended household. Nuclear households refer to those living arrangements in which only primary kin are involved. These are partners and children, or

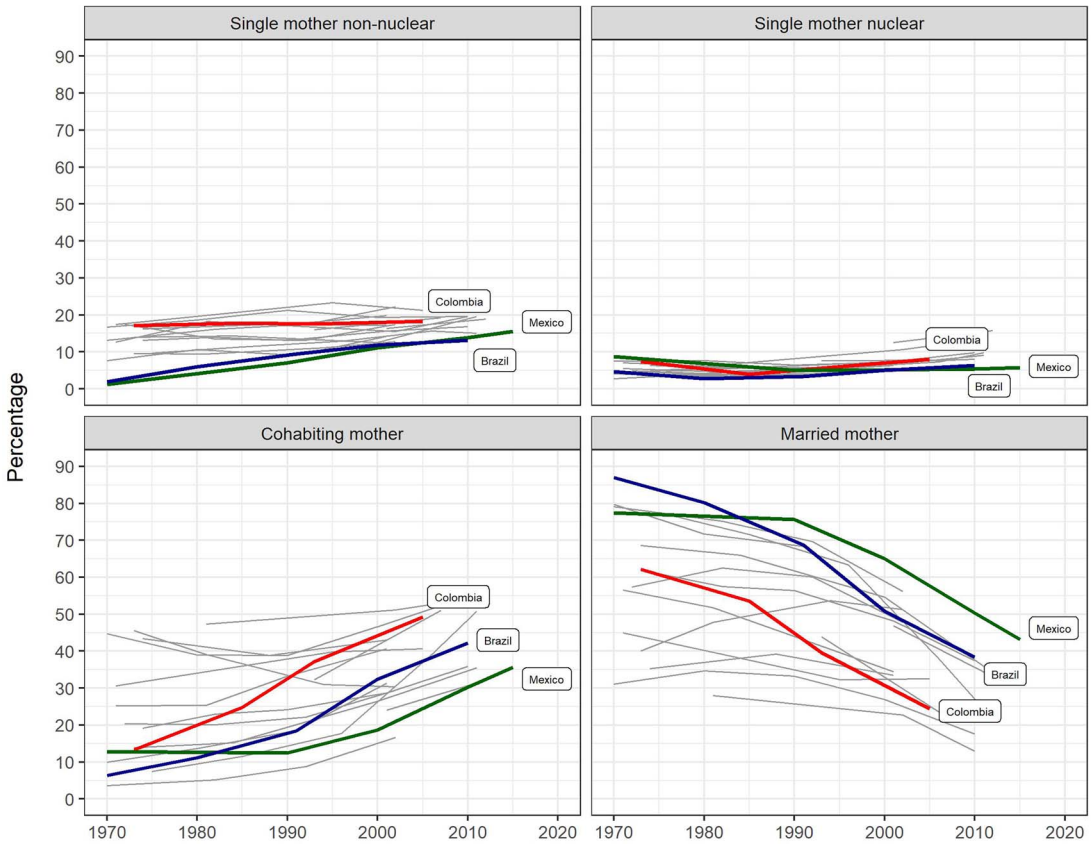

Figure 2: Changes in the family status of mothers aged 25–29 who co-reside with children across Latin American countries.
Source: Authors' calculations based on samples from IPUMS international

parents and siblings. Unpartnered mothers in nuclear households are women who co-reside with their children and nobody else. Depicted trends show the substantial decline in marriage and the increase in cohabitation. In the most recent observation, cohabiting mothers outnumber married mothers in 10 of the 17 countries under study (see Appendix 3). Likewise, although at a different pace, the percentage of single mothers has increased. Across all countries and years, single mothers in extended households outnumber single mothers in nuclear households. On average, the former is almost twice as large as the latter. For Mexico and Brazil, we observe a steady increase of single mothers in non-nuclear households and a more modest increase of single mothers in nuclear households. While census data does not allow examining if some of these women were in partnership before they became mothers, a substantial amount of them likely resulted from union dissolution.

The general trends described until this point refer to the total young population. However, research has shown that important variations exist across social groups. Several axes of analysis can be used to examine these variations. The first one is *gender*. Gender is essential as men and women experience different timing and intensity of family formation. A second axis of differentiation is *ethnicity* and *race*, which is captured in censuses in various ways. A third axis of classification is *education*, which is indeed included in all censuses and has a high level of comparability.

In Fig. 3, we represent the proportion of women aged 25–29 who co-reside with children, as shown by the height of bars, by educational attainment (panels). The difference of up to 100% corresponds to women who do not co-reside with children in that specific age group. We further classify these women based on their family status, using the same categories as in Fig. 2 Data are shown for three countries: Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico. Results look similar across all countries. The horizontal axis shows trends over time. First, we see that the proportion of mothers among women aged 25–29 decreases as women's level of education increases. The proportion of mothers among 25–29 university graduates remains below 40% across the three countries and census rounds, except in Mexico 1970. By contrast, more than 70% of women with less than secondary education co-reside with children. Among women with secondary education, the share of co-residing children varies from 44% for Brazil 1970 to above 60% for Mexico 2015 and Colombia 2005. Consistent with the idea of stability in early union formation and childbearing (Castro Torres et al., 2022), the shares of women with less than secondary and secondary completed co-residing with children do not diminish over time. In the three countries co-residence with children among these groups is higher in the most recent censuses compared to previous ones.

Trends in co-residence with children by educational attainment are divergent. On one side, we observe a maintenance or rejuvenation of trends among the lowest and medium educated women and a maintenance or postponement among the highest educated. In a context of educational expansion, these trends have yielded an aggregate idea of stabilization at the population level that comes with significant variations across social groups. Consistent with this, recent research on fertility has provided evidence of a bimodal fertility schedule, strongly stratified by educational attainment: lower educated/class women having children at younger ages and high educated women having children at later ages (Rios-Neto et al., 2018; Lima et al., 2021).

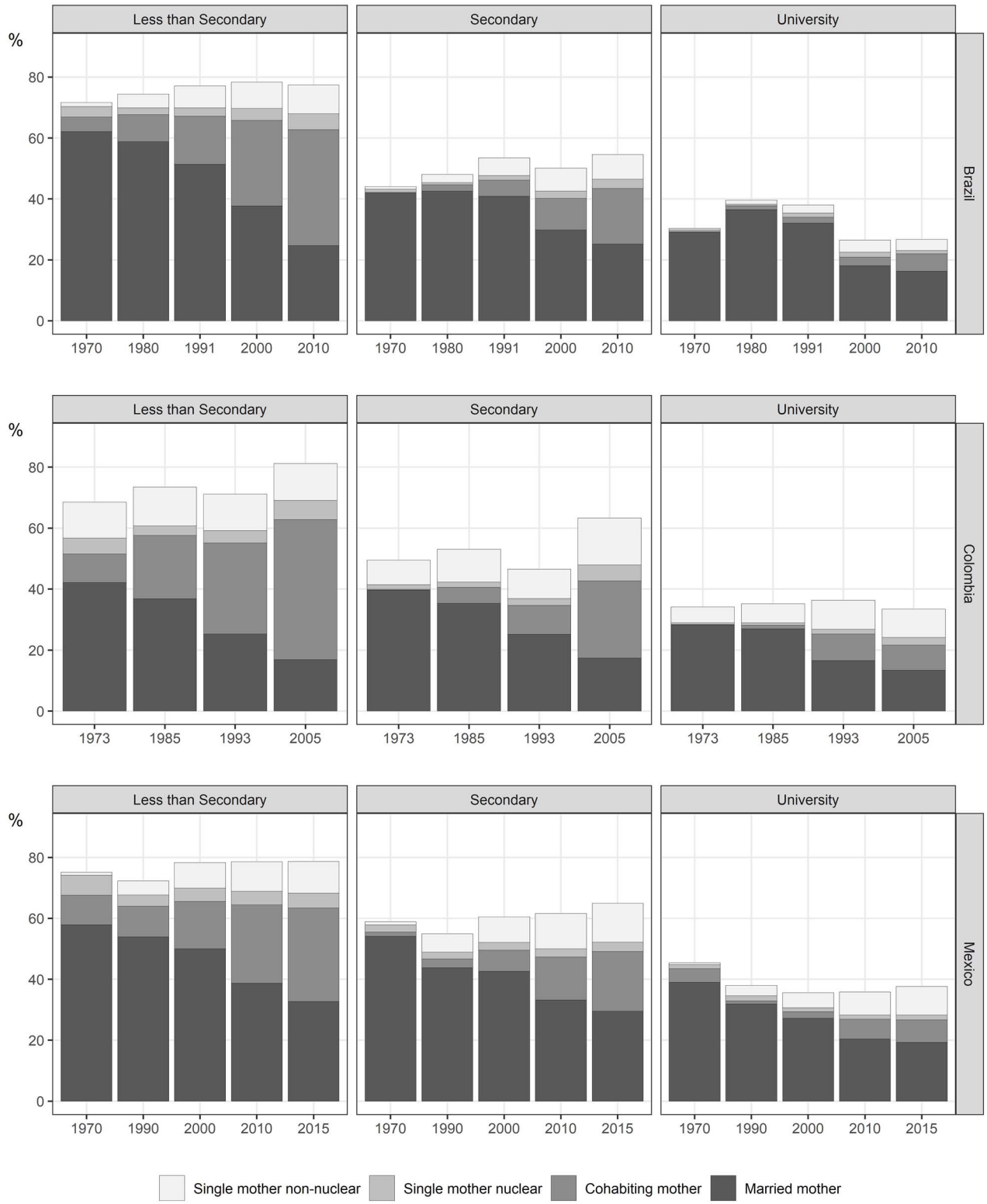

Figure 3: Change in the percentage of women aged 25–29 with co-resident children by family status and educational attainment in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.
Source: Authors' calculations based on samples from IPUMS international

As we mentioned in the introduction and confirmed by Fig. 3, the stability of union formation and childbearing is one of the unique features of Latin American and Caribbean countries. This contrasts with other parts of the world where declines in fertility have been accompanied by postponements of union formation and childbearing (Rosero-Bixby et al., 2009; Lesthaeghe, 2014), largely attributed to the expansion of women's education and labor force participation. In Latin America, however, the expansion of education has taken place without the postponement of partnership formation and childbearing (Casterline and Mendoza, 2009), raising concerns about the quality and transformative role of education in Latin American and Caribbean societies

(Castro-Martín and Juarez, 1995; Bongaarts et al., 2017; Batyra, 2020).

The paradox is served: while family transitions are heavily stratified by educational attainment, the expansion of education produces no aggregate effects on postponement. Education becomes a positional good with respect to others but not an agent of transformative behaviors. Relative measures of education based on quintiles of the least and best educated show that ages at union formation and childbearing remain stable over time despite the absolute number of years of schooling attained (Esteve and Florez-Paredes, 2018b).

Figure 3 also provides information on the family status of women co-residing with children: single mother non-nuclear, single mother nuclear, cohabiting mother, and married mother. Across educational groups, we observe a decline in marriage rates, and increases in unmarried cohabitation and single mothers in nuclear and non-nuclear (extended or composite) households. In absolute terms, the expansion of unmarried cohabitation is more pronounced among the least educated women. Unmarried cohabitation has been historically more frequent among low educated women but at much lower levels than the ones observed in recent times. Among highly educated women, marriage is more common than cohabitation, which does not happen among women with secondary education or less. Across all educational groups, a sizeable share of women co-resides with own children without the presence of a partner in the household. Unpartnered motherhood is more frequent among the least educated women with percentages ranging from 1% to 15% depending on the country and year. Most unpartnered mothers raise their children in extended/composite households, often including parents and non-primary kin.

The family context of children and adolescents

Changes in family formation can also be observed from the perspective of the children. Figure 4 provides a graphical representation of the family context in which children and adolescents, 7 to 16, are raised across Latin American and Caribbean countries. These ages include the most common schooling ages across countries. To characterize the family context of children, we use nine categories that result from the combination of three variables: co-residence with parents, women's type of union/partnership and type of household. *Type of union* applies only to children who co-reside with both parents, and it distinguishes between cohabiting and married couples. *Co-residence with parents* includes 'both parents', 'only mother', 'only father', and 'no parents'. *Type of household* distinguishes between 'nuclear' (exposure to primary kins only) and 'non-nuclear' (exposure to non-primary kin relatives and others).

Between 60% and 80% of children co-reside with both parents. When both parents are present, marriage constitutes, for most countries, the most frequent partnership arrangement except in the Dominican Republic 2002–2010, Colombia 2005, Haiti 2003, and Panama 2000–2010. Depending on the country, children co-residing with cohabiting unions range from 11,9 to 44,1%. Regarding household type, the most common arrangement for children is to live in nuclear households with either cohabiting or married parents. In both married and cohabiting families, we observe a sizable share of non-nuclear households, usually larger among married couples than among cohabiting ones.

The percentage of children living with only their mothers ranges from 7,5% in Haiti 2003. Consistent with Fig. 3, co-residence with an unpartnered mother takes place in the context of non-nuclear (i.e. extended or composite) living arrangements. By contrast, a small proportion of children co-reside with an unpartnered father (from 1,5% in Costa Rica 2010 to 8,3% in Bolivia 2012). In all countries except Argentina 2001, Bolivia 2012, Costa Rica 2000, and Paraguay 2002, non-nuclear households outnumber nuclear households among unpartnered father households.

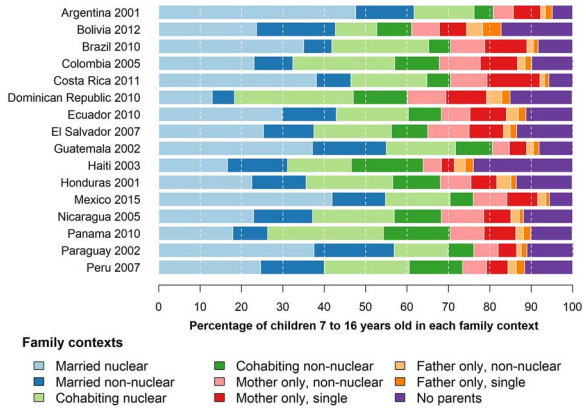

Figure 4: The family context of children aged 7 to 16 across selected Latin American countries.
Source: Authors' calculations based on samples from IPUMS international

Some children do not co-reside with their parents. This proportion ranges from 23% in Haiti 2003 to less than 5% in Argentina 2001. Censuses do not provide enough information to determine why these children do not live with their parents. Some might have left the parental homes, others might be orphans, and others might have their parents away and stay with their grandparents or other relatives. Although the cross-sectional nature of census data limits our understanding of the parental absence and changes in co-residence over childhood (Reynolds, 2022; Reynolds and Cakouros, 2022), these results indicate that the family context can be a locus for the intergenerational transmission of disadvantages, e.g. if absent parents are more likely to be from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Implications for children and women

The study of family patterns and trends per se has attracted sociological and demographic interest for its ability to reveal broad societal changes. From a micro-level perspective, family structures have been linked to social disadvantage (Schady et al., 2015). Establishing causal relationships between family structure and children's outcomes requires data with a longitudinal perspective and more conceptual detail than the one available in population censuses. The use of census microdata to examine children's and women's outcomes is limited to very few variables and to basic correlational approaches. This requires caution in the interpretation of results (Tommasi et al., 2021). With such caveats in mind, next we examine the association between family context and status on children's schooling outcomes and women's labor force participation respectively. We connect these results with existing studies for the USA, and several Latin American and Caribbean countries that had relied on longitudinal data and causality-oriented research designs (Bernal, 2008; Bernal and Keane, 2011; Reynolds et al., 2018; Reynolds, 2022).

Implications for Children's school attendance and progress

Across the world, countries have put substantial effort into improving the quality and quantity of education as a way of

ensuring both individual and societal development. The United Nations has set a global agenda for improving educational standards worldwide (UNESCO, 2022). To monitor progress towards these goals, specific indicators have been identified. We focus on school attendance and progress. The first refers to the percentage of all children of schooling ages that attend school. The second one is the percentage of children of a given age that attend the grade or level of school they are expected to attend based on their age.

Multiple factors potentially explain variations in school attendance and progress among children. These factors can be grouped at several levels: individual, family, community and institutional. Institutional factors, such as school resources or policies, impact school attendance ensuring that all children have access to education. The mechanisms that are in place to monitor children's attendance are a major responsibility of governments worldwide. Local communities also play a role as they provide resources and facilities to implement school policies and they have direct contact with the children and their families. While institutional and local community factors are important at the aggregate level, variations in school attendance within communities might be related to family and individual factors. Families are equipped with unequal cultural and economic resources to promote the educational development of their children. Individual factors such as the ability to learn might also play a role. These factors interact in multiple ways and are responsible for individual variations in school attendance and progress (García and de Oliveira, 2011; Amato et al., 2015; DeRose et al., 2017).

Here we examine the relationship between the family context in which children were living at the time of the census and school attendance. We use a multivariate Poisson regression approach. We run a separate model for every country and year. In total, there are 21 samples. To partially overcome the bias in significance levels due to multiple testing, p-values are corrected using the Bonferroni correction (Shaffer, 1995). The dependent variable is school attendance. This is a standard variable captured in all Latin American censuses. We restrict the analysis to children aged 7 to 16, which are the most typical schooling ages.

Table 1 displays the sample sizes of children and women for our 21 census samples along with the country-level percentage of children attending school and with corresponding school progress according to their age. These sample sizes are one of the most important strengths of the IPUMS data. For women, Table 1 displays the proportion in the labor market. Finally, the last two columns indicate the percentage of children residing in urban areas and the Human Development Index for each country and year.

As we move on to document relative gaps in children's schooling and women's labor force participation outcomes, we need to keep in mind overarching levels in these outcomes. Table 1 displays this information. School attendance is above 70% in all samples. The lowest value is observed for Honduras in 2001, where 72.3% of children aged 7 to 16 were attending school at the time of the census. The highest value pertains to Brazil 2010 with 95.1%. Level of school attendance increases over time across all countries. The same patterns apply to school progress, despite differences in levels. The maximum and minimum for this variable are 35.1% in Haiti 2003 and 92.1% in Bolivia 2012. Although these two outcomes may be correlated, they capture potentially different dimensions of school performance. As for women, labor force participation ranges from 31.7% in Honduras in 2001 to 84.3% in the Dominican Republic in 2002.

Figure 5 shows the country-year-specific coefficients capturing the influence of family context on school attendance (top panel) and progress (bottom panel). Models are run separately country by country. For representation purposes, the scale of the *x*-axes in the top and bottom panels are not the same. We label countries with the smallest and largest coefficients within each family context. Children in *married nuclear* households are taken as the reference group. The horizontal axis represents differences with regard to the reference category expressed in relative risk. Values above 1 indicate that children in that family context are more likely to attend school and have progressed more adequately than children in married nuclear households. Values below 1 indicate the opposite. For example, a coefficient of 0.9 suggests that the school attendance of the observed category is 90% of the reference category which is set at 1 (representing the baseline or no change). Conversely, a value of 1.1 indicates that the observed category has a school attendance level that is 10% higher than the reference category.

We rely on graphical features to contextualize these coefficients. We distinguish between urban and rural areas, and we color the country coefficients based on the period of the census (2000–03 and 2004–15). The shape of the markers indicates a subregional grouping: Caribbean, Central America, and South America. And their sizes represent the level of the Human Development Index (Low <0.546, Medium <0.697, and High <0.796). Filled symbols identify coefficients that differ from the reference category in a statistically significant way. Unfilled symbols represent parameters that do not differ significantly from the reference category.

We control for the age of the child in two-year age groups, a dummy variable indicating the presence of other children in the household, and the educational attainment of the highest achiever among the child's parents or the household head when the parents were absent. Results on these control variables are not commented on in detail but some general remarks can be made. School attendance and progress are negatively correlated with age and with the presence of other children in the household. This latter variable displays the largest and most heterogeneous coefficients across the samples. Expectedly, children living in households where the highest achiever did not finish primary school are less likely to attend school and progress adequately. There are no big gaps between children in households with higher levels of education.

A summary of the main results found in the top panels in Fig. 5 regarding school attendance goes as follows. First, there are significant and large variations in levels of school attendance by family context. In most cases, non-marital family contexts are associated with school attendance penalties that range between 0.83 and 0.97. Second, such differences are less pronounced in urban areas than in rural areas, which signals the context-dependent nature of family functioning. Third, temporal, geographical, and HDI-related patterns in the role of family contexts on children's school attendance are not apparent; markers of all colors, sizes and shapes are distributed along the range of the regression coefficients. This lack of patterns may be related to the relatively short intercensal period, the arbitrariness of subregional groupings, and the minor variation in countries' HDI (range: 0.449 to 0.786), respectively. However, it may also signal a Latin American and Caribbean specificity where non-marital familial contexts are negatively associated with children's outcomes over time and across space. This interpretation is in line with studies showing weak country-level correlations between the HDI and partnership regimes and household structure indicators (Pesando and GFC

Table 1: Sample sizes and descriptive statistics for children's and women's outcome and country level percentage of urban population and Human Development Index

Country - year	Children			Women		Country	
	Total	Attending school (%)	School progress (%)	Total	Labor force participation	Urban (%)	HDI
Argentina 2001	679.302	94,5	82,7	725.196	64,9	91,2	78,6
Bolivia 2001	203.579	89,3	74,5	164.402	52,9	70,0	63,0
Bolivia 2012	211.766	93,0	92,1	213.322	63,8	73,9	67,5
Brazil 2000	4.219.584	91,9	68,2	4.441.555	65,0	84,8	68,5
Brazil 2010	3.734.468	95,1	n.a.	4.544.588	71,1	87,0	72,7
Colombia 2005	860.714	85,9	73,8	817.081	47,0	80,2	68,9
Costa Rica 2000	84.436	86,1	68,1	83.688	41,3	62,1	72,1
Costa Rica 2011	75.292	90,4	79,5	98.581	53,1	73,5	77,8
Dominican Republic 2002	189.587	87,5	62,3	182.918	84,3	67,4	66,8
Dominican Republic 2010	194.973	92,6	73,0	203.189	53,6	77,4	70,6
Ecuador 2001	267.257	79,4	72,2	257.758	42,7	76,6	68,0
Ecuador 2010	306.501	91,5	83,3	307.500	57,0	66,5	72,6
El Salvador 2007	138.443	82,4	68,0	124.791	49,7	66,8	65,2
Guatemala 2002	292.431	80,3	47,6	218.259	30,1	51,3	56,3
Haiti 2003	209.917	51,0	35,3	182.222	56,4	48,2	44,9
Honduras 2001	162.819	72,3	53,1	118.540	31,7	53,6	57,0
Mexico 2015	2.289.273	92,4	90,5	2.425.567	47,6	78,9	76,6
Nicaragua 2005	131.265	78,1	54,3	109.758	41,8	59,2	60,1
Panama 2000	57.366	89,5	79,0	60.341	54,6	68,7	73,5
Panama 2010	66.228	94,3	84,4	71.385	56,6	70,3	77,4
Paraguay 2002	127.433	86,5	68,1	101.595	48,9	64,5	66,2
Peru 2007	572.249	92,0	84,1	599.083	50,3	80,5	70,4
Total	15.074.883	90,8	74,9	16.051.319	60,1	81,2	71,0

Note: For the regression analyses we excluded 50 365 children who declared being the household head. This exclusion is unlikely to drive our due to its relatively small size (0.3% of the sample), and allows us to measure more accurately household arrangements based on the parental generation.

team., 2019). Forthcoming census rounds will be fundamental to further test this interpretation.

On the specific variations in school attendance by family context, several conclusions come into place. Children co-residing with married households in either nuclear or non-nuclear households have the highest rates of school attendance both in rural and urban areas and in all the countries studied. Children in other family contexts have systematically lower levels of school attendance. After children residing with married couples, the highest levels of school attendance are found among children residing with single mothers.

Although our model specifications do not test the statistical significance of all potential comparisons, a visual inspection reveals several patterns. Variations in school attendance by type of household (nuclear versus non-nuclear) among single mothers are relatively small. Children in single-mother households show higher levels of school attendance than those residing with cohabiting couples, regardless of the type of household. School attendance among children in cohabiting non-nuclear households is slightly lower than among those in cohabiting nuclear households (i.e. more negative coefficients visually). Notably, the largest difference in school attendance compared to children in married households is found among those who do not live with their mothers. Children in motherless households have the lowest levels of school attendance, regardless of the presence of the father. The association between motherless households and school attendance is stronger in rural than in urban areas.

The bottom panels of Fig. 5 show the same scheme but for a different outcome variable: school progress. This measures the extent to which the children are attending the corresponding level given their age. It is constructed as a dummy variable where one means the child is at the corresponding level for his/her age. The overall pattern is quite similar to the school attendance but, in general, coefficients are lower and more spread, suggesting that there is more heterogeneity across countries. Children co-residing with married couples in nuclear households (reference category) or in non-nuclear households are the ones who show school progress according to their age. All other categories fall systematically below them. Again, children living with cohabiting couples or without the mother show the lowest scores. In comparison, the school progress shown by children raised in married non-nuclear and single-mother households, regardless of household composition, is closer to the children raised by married couples than any other category.

Implications for Women's labor force participation

There is ample evidence of the implications of family life, union formation, and childbearing on women's professional careers (Shelton and John, 1996; Becker, 1998). The so-called motherhood penalty revolves around the idea that childbearing is many times detrimental to women's pursuing a job career in similar terms to men. Research on this topic has been mainly dominated by studies in Western countries where most jobs are created in the formal sectors (Connelly, 1992). In comparison, there is less research in lower-income countries with informal economies. Beyond the economy, gender norms also play a role. Men and women are given different roles in production and reproduction tasks (Shelton and John, 1996; Hu and Mu, 2021). Heterosexual couples might have incentives to specialize in roles in adapting to the socially stemmed better job employability of men. While the male breadwinner model has been eroding in Western societies as a result massive entrance of women into the labor force participation and tertiary education, this trend is far from reaching similar levels in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this section, we investigate if there are significant differences in labor

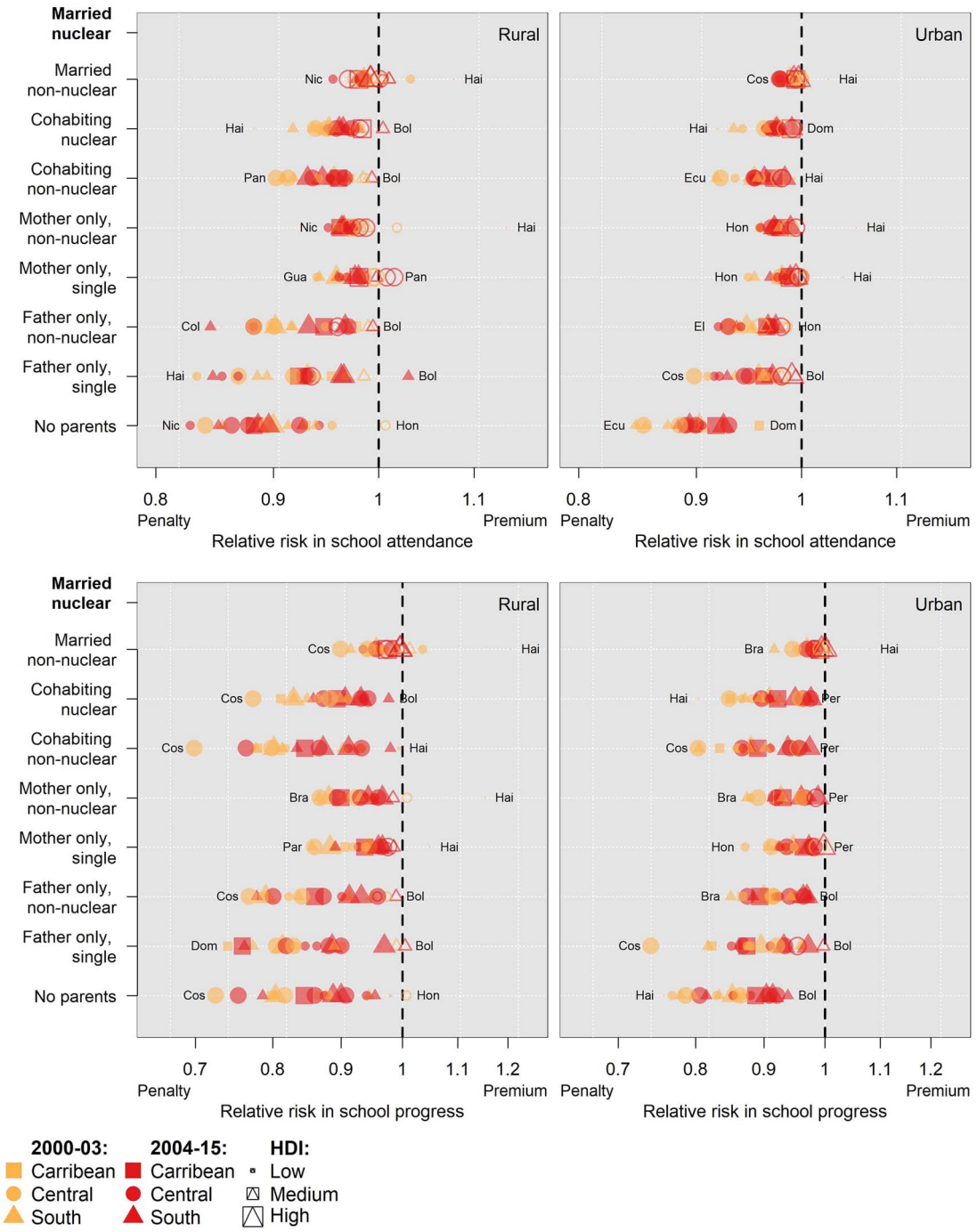

Figure 5: Exponentiated Poisson regression coefficients for children school attendance (top panels) and progress (bottom panels) by family context in Latin American.

Source: IPUMS international.

Note: Model controls for children's age in two-year age groups, a dummy variable indicating the presence of other children in the household, and the educational attainment of the highest achiever between parents (if present) and the household head. To partially overcome the bias in significance levels due to multiple testing, p-values are corrected using the Bonferroni correction, and statistical significance is assessed at a 95% confidence level. The markers on the x-axis are not equidistant because the relative risks imply multiplicative differences. Differences are symmetric on the log scale

force participation among women based on their family status. This analysis builds on census microdata for 16 countries and follows the same visualization strategy as in Fig. 5.

Figure 6 shows women's relative risk of being in the labor force for family statuses other than *Married* (reference category). We compare childless women (top panels) with mothers (bottom panels) in rural (left) and urban (right) areas. To be more precise, we compare women who have co-resident children (mothers) with women with no co-resident children. The latter might be childless (presumably many of them) but some might have children living elsewhere. Models control for women's age and educational attainment.

Several general conclusions arise from the observation of these panels. First, family status is associated with labor force participation. Unpartnered/single women are more likely to be in the labor market than partnered women, particularly among mothers. The association between cohabitation and labor force participation, instead, varies from positive to negative across

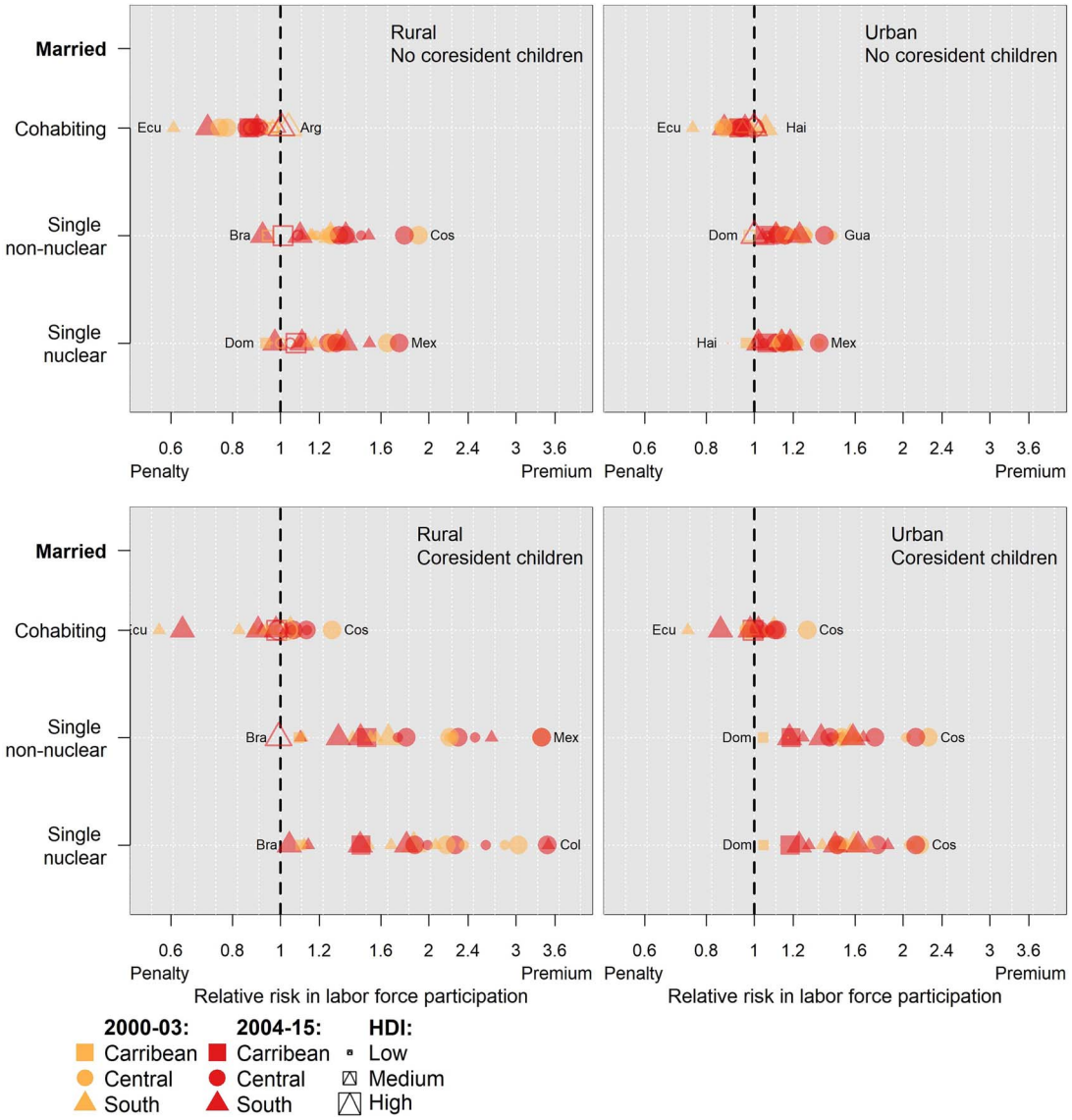

Figure 6: Exponentiated Poisson regression coefficients for women's labor force participation by family status in selected Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Source: IPUMS international.

Note: Model controls for women's age in four-year age groups (18 to 21, 22 to 25, . . . , 42 to 46), and three categories of educational attainment (less than primary, primary or secondary school, university education). To partially overcome the bias in significance levels due to multiple testing, p-values are corrected using the Bonferroni correction, and statistical significance is assessed at a 95% confidence level. The markers on the x-axis are not equidistant because the relative risks imply multiplicative differences. Differences are symmetric on the log scale

countries, reflecting the cultural and social class diversity of cohabitation arrangements. Only among childless women (top panels), cohabitation seems to be negatively associated with labor force participation, particularly in rural areas. Second, variations in women's labor force participation by family status are larger for mothers than for women without children. Third, coefficients are also larger for rural than for urban areas. Female labor force participation is lower in rural than in urban areas, which may contribute to greater relative gaps in the former areas. As for the results for children's school attendance and progress, there are no clear patterns over time, across space, and by HDI level, suggesting the potential persistency of family contexts on children's and women's outcomes. The coefficients for the control variables display expected patterns. Labor force participation is positively associated with women's age and educational attainment.

Discussion

In this chapter, we have exploited census microdata samples to provide an overarching view of the main family transformations in Latin America and the Caribbean countries over recent decades. We have also examined the relationship between family status and context, and children's schooling attendance and progress and women's labor force participation patterns.

Our results show that families in Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced profound transformations in recent decades. These transformations include dramatic declines in fertility, class-specific patterns of early and delayed transitions to union formation and childbearing, increases in cohabitation, union dissolutions, and single motherhood. A significant number of young mothers, partnered and unpartnered, co-reside in non-nuclear households. These shifts have also modified the

family structure of children and mothers. The family context of motherhood has changed dramatically because of changes in union type and dissolution. An increasing number of mothers raise their children outside of marriage, mainly within cohabiting unions but also as single mothers. These trends hold for all ethnic/racial and educational groups. Cohabiting unions have been characterized as less stable than married ones.

When examining the relationship between family context and school attendance of children and women's economic activity, we have found a positive association between the family context in which children are raised and their levels of school attendance and progress. Children of married couples perform better than any other children both in terms of attendance and progress. After them, children in single-mother households perform better than children raised in cohabiting couples and much better than children in motherless households. These findings show the importance of the presence of the mother in the household. The difference between cohabiting and single-mother households is particularly intriguing, as the presence of a father in the former might be read as detrimental to the children's performance. Extensive literature shows that the sociodemographic profile associated with cohabitation and marriage is different. The first is more prevalent among low socioeconomic groups, even though this has been changing in recent years (Esteve et al., 2012a; Covre-Sussai et al., 2015). These dual union modalities also show differences in union stability, with cohabiting couples displaying a higher propensity for dissolution than marriages, and potential negative implications for children (Manning and Lamb, 2003; Osborne et al., 2007). This instability could partially explain the negative association between cohabitation and children's educational outcomes. However, with the data at hand, this remains a sociological interpretation that requires further investigation through different analytical approaches. Despite controls, our models are not sufficiently developed to establish any kind of causal relationship and to unveil the potential mechanisms. These results should be read in combination with the ample sociological and anthropological literature on women's agency in single-mother households, which have not been echoed in this chapter. Regarding the differential labor force participation of women based on their family status, we found that single mothers are more likely to participate in the labor market than any other women. Future research, with more detailed data, should investigate how single motherhood, children's schooling outcomes, and women's labor force participation relate to the reproduction of inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors declare no conflict of interest regarding this manuscript.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Albert Esteve (Conceptualization, Methodology, Visualization, Writing—original draft, Writing—review & editing) Andrés F. Castro Torres (Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Visualization, Writing—original draft) Federica Becca (Visualization, Writing—original draft, Writing—review & editing).

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data are available at the Integrated Public-use Microdata Series International: https://international.ipums.org/international/.

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Appendix 1: Latin American and Caribbean Population Census samples included in the study

Country	Decade						
	60s	70s	80s	90s	00s	10s	15 s
Argentina		1970	1980	1991	2001		
Bolivia		1976		1992	2001	2012	
Brazil		1970	1980	1991	2000	2010	
Chile		1970	1982	1992	2002		
Colombia		1973	1985	1993	2005		
Costa Rica		1973	1984		2000	2011	
Dominican Republic			1981		2002	2010	
Ecuador		1974	1982	1990	2001	2010	
El Salvador					2007		
Guatemala	1964	1973	1981	1994	2002		
Haiti					2003		
Honduras		1974	1988		2001		
Mexico		1970		1990	2000	2010	2015
Nicaragua		1971		1995	2005		
Panama	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	
Paraguay	1962	1972	1982	1992	2002		
Peru				1993	2007		
Uruguay	1963	1975	1985	1996	2006	2011	
Venezuela		1971	1981	1990	2001		

Source: IPUMS international.

Appendix 2: Total Fertility Rate in selected Latin American and Caribbean countries

Country	Total Fertility Rate							
	50s	60s	70s	80s	90s	00s	10s	15 s
Argentina			3,4	2,9	2,7	2,5	2,3	2,2
Bolivia			5,8	5,4		3,8	3,0	2,8
Brazil		6,3	4,1	3,6	2,5	2,0	1,7	
Chile	4,8	4,7	3,5	2,5	2,3	1,9	1,9	1,6
Colombia		5,6	4,5	3,4	2,9	1,9	1,7	2,3
Costa Rica	7,0	6,8	3,8	3,5	2,9	2,0	1,8	1,7
Cuba			1,8	1,8	1,5	1,5	1,7	1,6
Dominican Republic				3,7	3,7	3,0	2,6	2,3
Ecuador		6,4	6,2	4,3		2,2	2,2	2,5
El Salvador				4,2	4,1	3,0		
Guatemala		6,5		5,6	5,7	4,5	3,3	
Haiti		6,9	5,9		5,8	4,1	3,1	
Honduras	5,9	6,6	6,8		4,9	3,3	2,7	
Jamaica		5,8	4,3	2,6	2,7	2,4		1,6
Mexico				4,1	2,9	2,3		2,1
Nicaragua	5,0	5,4			4,6	3,2		
Panama	5,2	5,4	4,0	3,2	2,7	2,4	2,5	2,4
Paraguay					4,2			2,5
Peru				4,1	4,1	2,9	2,6	2,2
Puerto Rico	4,6	4,0	2,9	2,3	2,1	1,6		
Saint Lucia			4,8	3,9	2,8	1,8	1,4	
Suriname					2,3	2,2	2,4	
Trinidad and Tobago	5,3	4,8	4,0	3,4	1,9	1,6		
Uruguay		2,8	3,0	2,6	2,2	2,1	1,9	1,7
Venezuela		6,3	4,5	3,7	3,0	2,7	2,4	

Source: ECLAC (https://statistics.cepal.org/).

Appendix 3: Percentage of married and cohabiting mothers 25–29 co-residing with children across selected Latin American and Caribbean countries

Country	Married Mother						Cohabiting Mother					
	70s	80s	90s	00s	10s	15 s	70s	80s	90s	00s	10s	15 s
Argentina	80	72	68	49			10	14	19	31		
Bolivia				47	33					24	32	
Brazil	87	80	69	51	38		6	11	18	32	42	
Chile	79	75	70	56			4	5	9	17		
Colombia	62	54	40	24			13	25	37	49		
Costa Rica	69	66		55	36		14	15		26	36	
Dom. Rep.		28		23	13			47		51	54	
Ecuador	61	58	56	48	37		19	23	24	29	36	
Guatemala	40	48	54	51			46	39	31	30		
Honduras	35	39		34			43	39		43		
Mexico	77		76	65	50	43	13		13	19	30	36
Nicaragua	45		32	33			31		40	41		
Panama	31	35	33	27	18		45	39	39	47	55	
Paraguay	57	63	60	48			20	20	22	29		
Peru			44	22					32	51		
Uruguay	78	72	63	38	24		7	12	18	39	51	
Venezuela	57	52	44	34			25	25	33	41		

Source: IPUMS international.

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