FERTILITY DECLINE AND PUBLIC POLICIES TO ADDRESS POPULATION RIGHTS: PERSPECTIVE FROM LATIN AMERICA

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United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Fertility, Changing Population Trends and Development: Challenges and Opportunities for the Future
Population Division, United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs
New York 21-22 October 2013

OVERVIEW

- Population growth, urbanization and fertility in Latin America

  1. Trends in level of fertility
  2. Trends in age-specific fertility rates
  3. Adolescent and youth fertility
  4. Distribution by parity
  5. Considerations on contraception

- Policy implications of low fertility

POPULATION GROWTH, URBANIZATION AND FERTILITY IN LATIN AMERICA

- Population
  - In 1950 → population 167.9 million;
  - In 1975 → population 324.7 million,
  - In 2020 → population 661.7 million
  - In 2050 → stabilizes in 751 million
    - 25 years to double between 1950 and 1975
    - and will likely take 45 years to double once again

The population "explosion" already happened.

- Rural population (Urban transition)
  - 1950 → 98.1 million (60% of total population)
  - 1990 → 31.4 million (30% of total population)
  - 2050 → about 11% of total population

The urban population "explosion" already happened and will intensify.

- From 1950 to 2050, total population will multiply by 4.4
- Urban population is expected to grow 9.4 times.

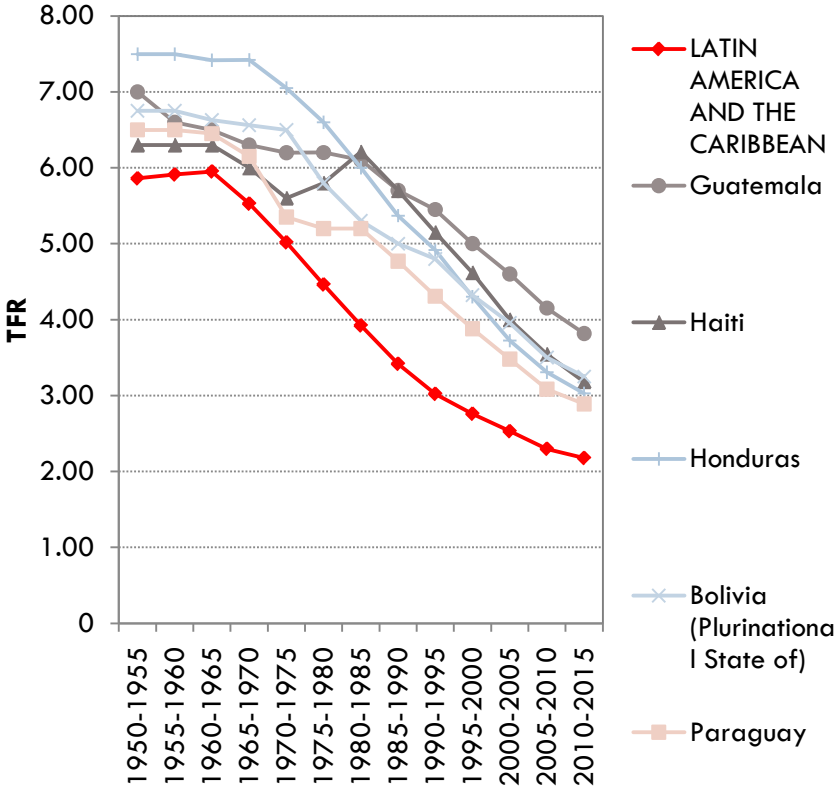
POPULATION GROWTH, URBANIZATION AND FERTILITY IN LATIN AMERICA

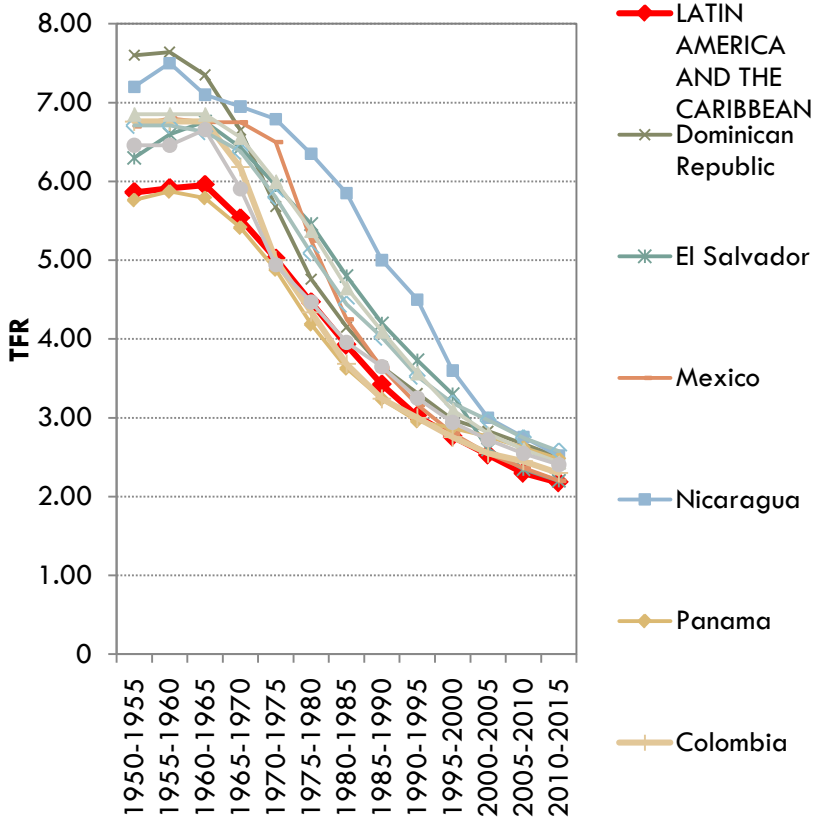
- **Population dynamics are no longer seen as an obstacle to development** and the new age structure has been transformed into a window of opportunity, since the average demographic dependency ratio for the region is on the way to reaching its lowest level in the period 2020-2025.
- **The decline in fertility, together with greater female autonomy, has banished the so-called "Malthusian ghosts"** of the population explosion in the LAC region (it already happened!)
- **Demographic conditions have been a stimulus for economic growth, while the greater participation of women in public life has made both a microeconomic and macroeconomic contribution to development**.
- Although many segments of the region's population still have high rates of unwanted pregnancies and lack access to modern contraceptive methods, **high fertility is no longer a general feature of the region**.

But.. Let's see some " details"….

Fertility level in Latin America

Total fertility by selected countries, Latin America, 1950-2015





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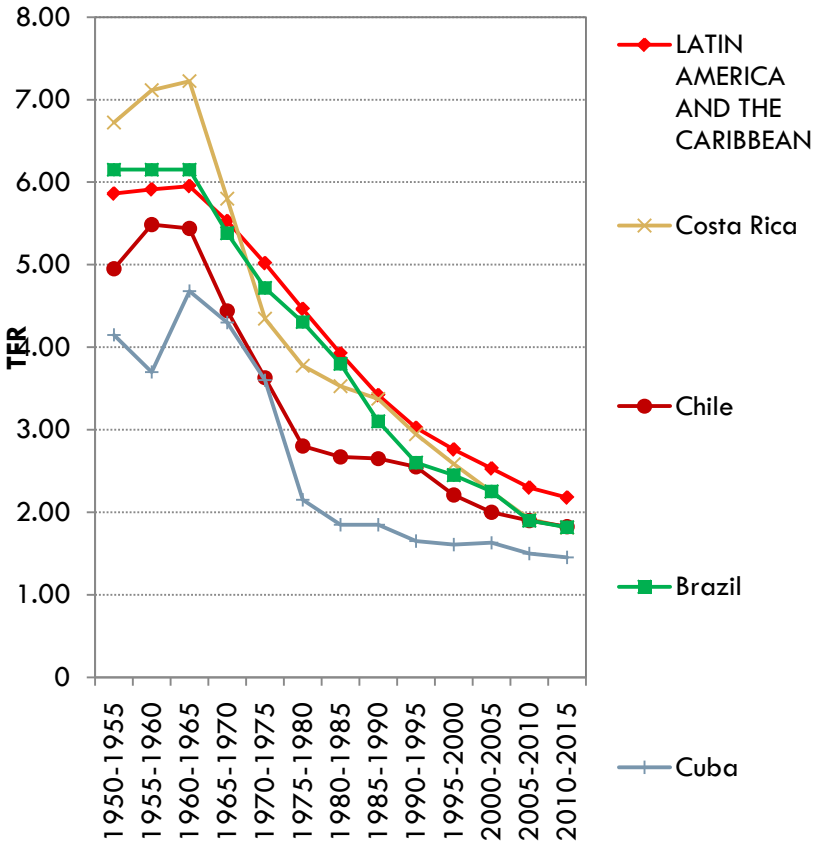
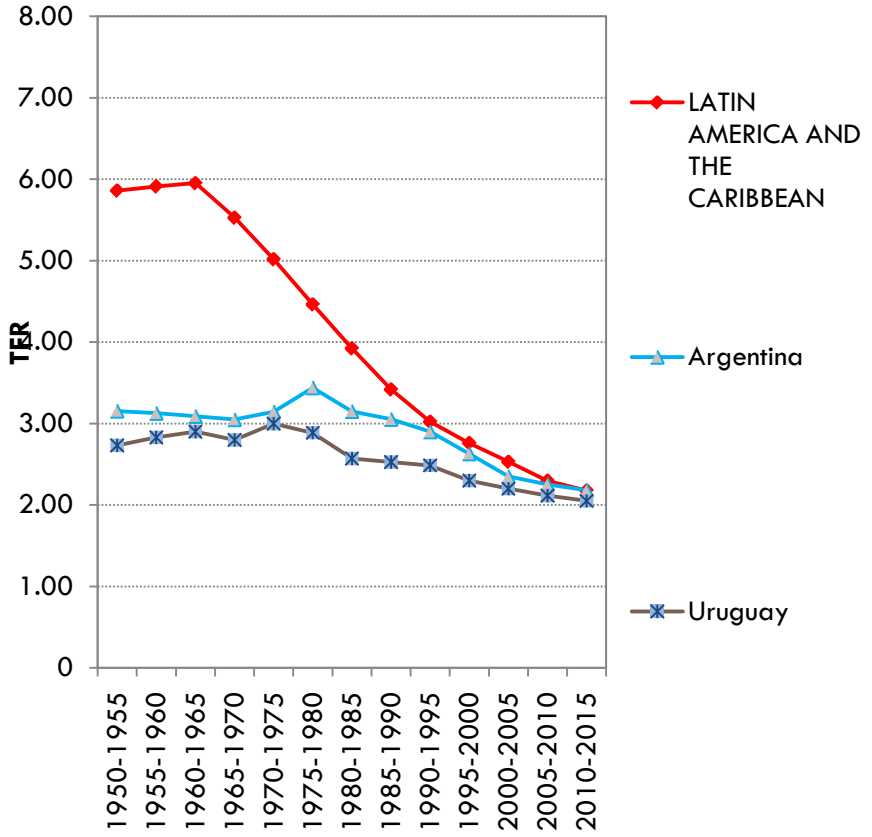
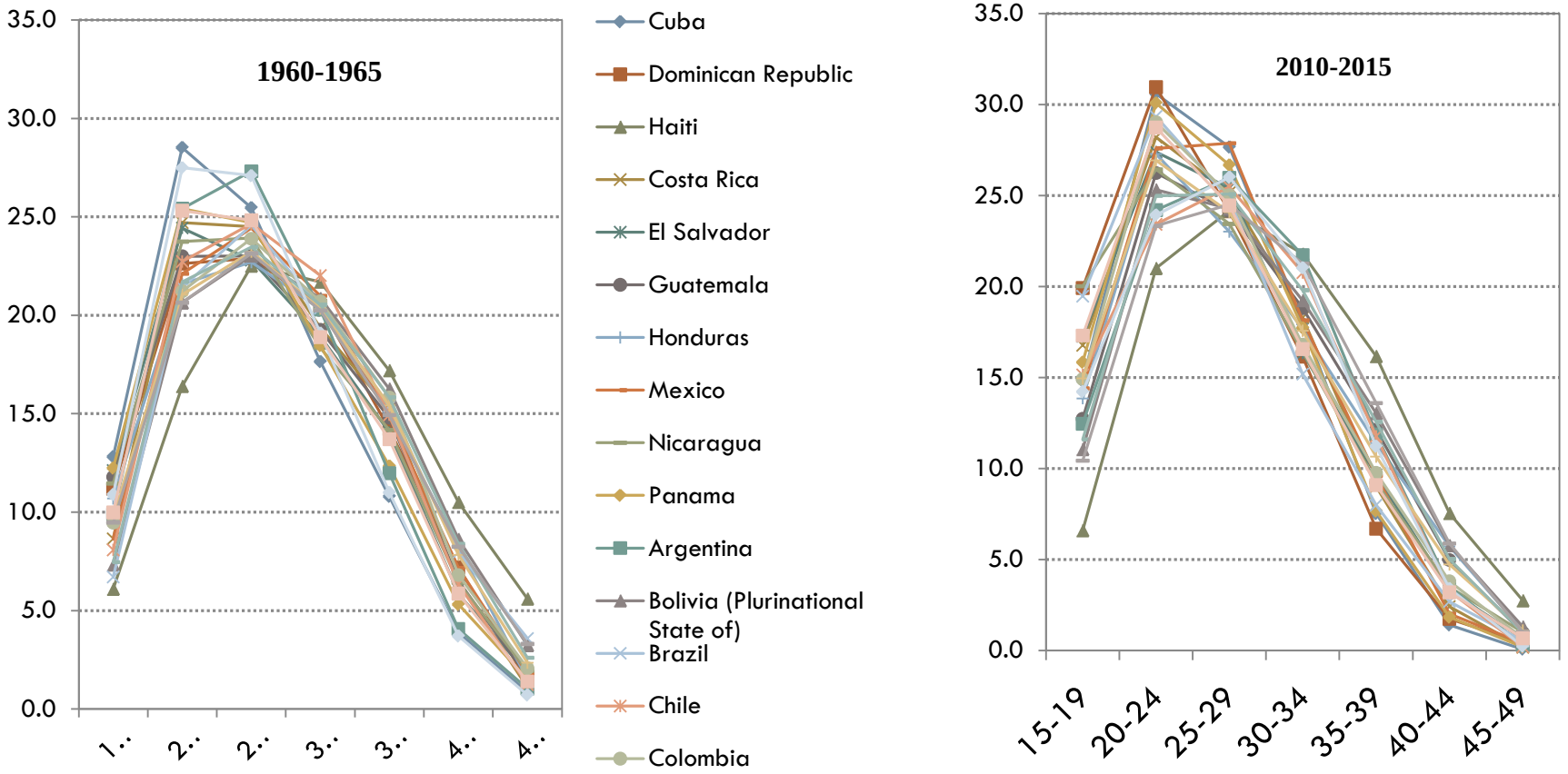




Fertility level in Latin America

Fertility age structure by selected countries, Latin America, for two periods, 1960-1965 and 2010-2015

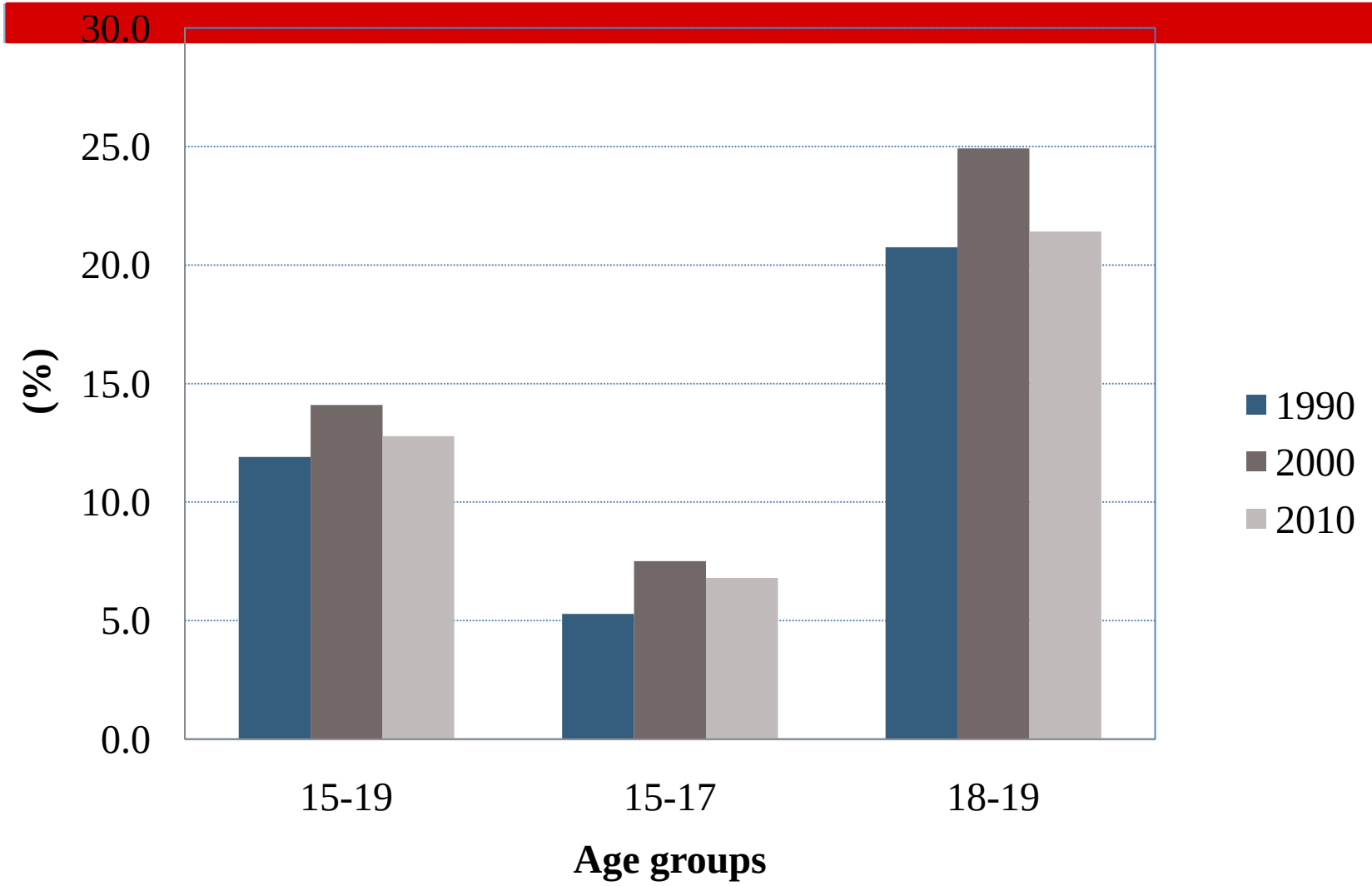


15-19 years older fertility and % of mothers

Country	Census' year	% motherhood 15 - 19	ASFR 15-19
Brazil	1991	11.5	81.7
	2000	14.8	93.3
	2010	11.8	70.0
Ecuador	1990	13.5	92.7
	2001	16.3	102.2
	2010	17.0	101.6
Mexico	1990	10.4	-
	2000	12.1	82.2
	2010	12.4	80.2
Panama	1990	16.1	109.7
	2000	17.4	107.1
	2010	15.4	95.9
Dominican Republic	2002	16.7	109.2
	2010	19.7	116.3
Uruguay	1985	8.4	62.4
	1995	13.9	74.2
	2011	9.5	55.8
Venezuela	1990	13.8	111.6
	2001	14.9	100.5
	2011	14.6	82.9

Source: Rodriguez and Cavenaghi (2013) estimated from microdata from Demographic Censuses.

Latin America: motherhood percentage by age groups 15-19, 15-17 and 18-19, around 1990, 2000 and 2010.

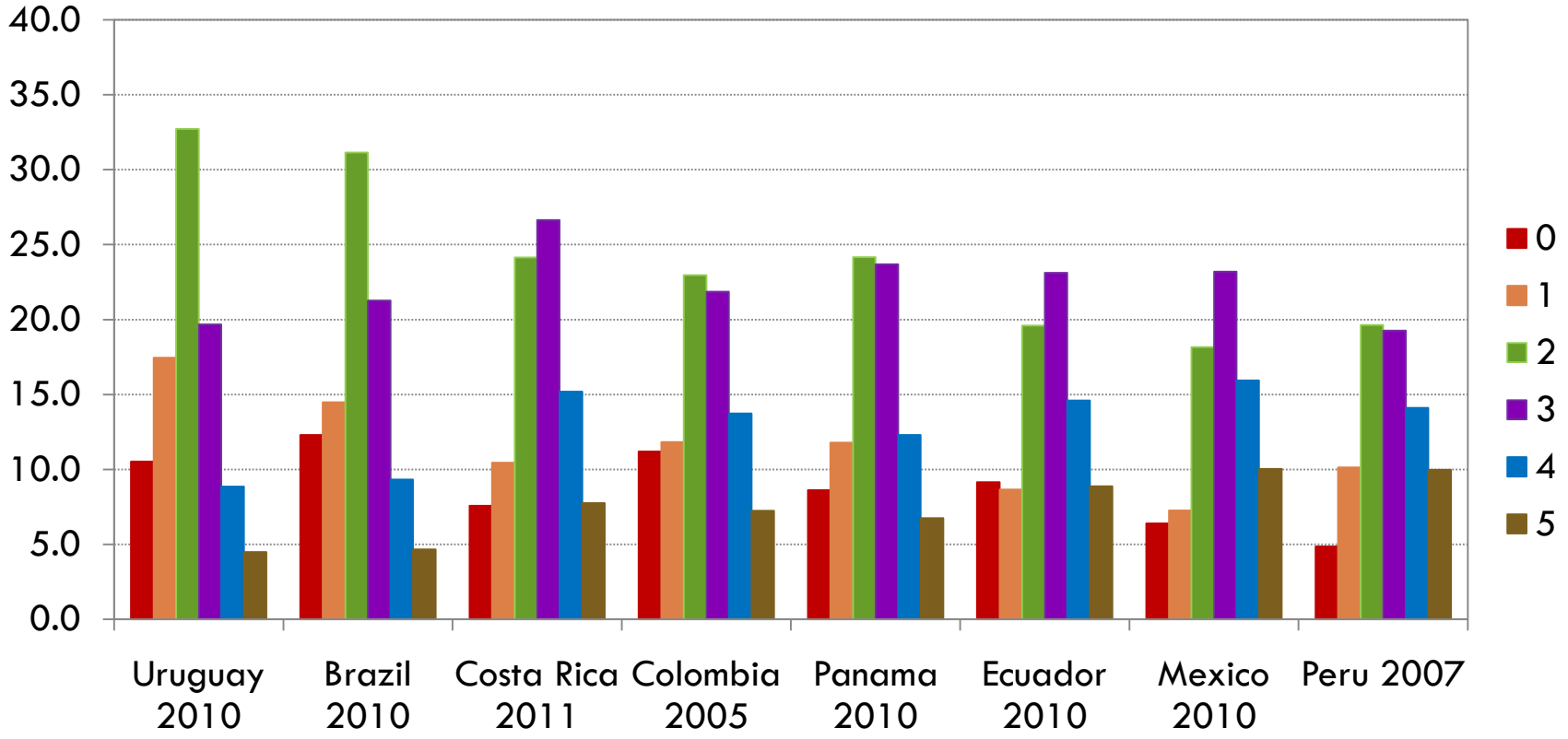


The role of education on adolescent Fertility

- **Education remains a critical factor to decrease motherhood at young ages** in the region.
- **Advances in the educational system** and, mainly the large improvements in the proportion of women attaining higher levels of education, **can explain most of the declines in fertility in the last 20 years, but the effects vary across countries.**
- **Some explicit policies**, such as the creation of the *Friendly health services for adolescents and youth* (http://planandinopea.org/) **are yet not sufficient to reduce youth fertility** (Ecuador)
- In the future, with **the expected improvements in education,** mainly among women, **a decrease in fertility rates is expected among those aged 15 to 19** years and older.
- Other policies directed to reduce unwanted adolescent fertility or indirect policies, such as continued policies for STI prevention, will have some effects in the level of fertility, bringing total fertility to lower levels in the near future.
- It is not reasonable to think that reductions in adolescent fertility will reverse in the future (UN projections).

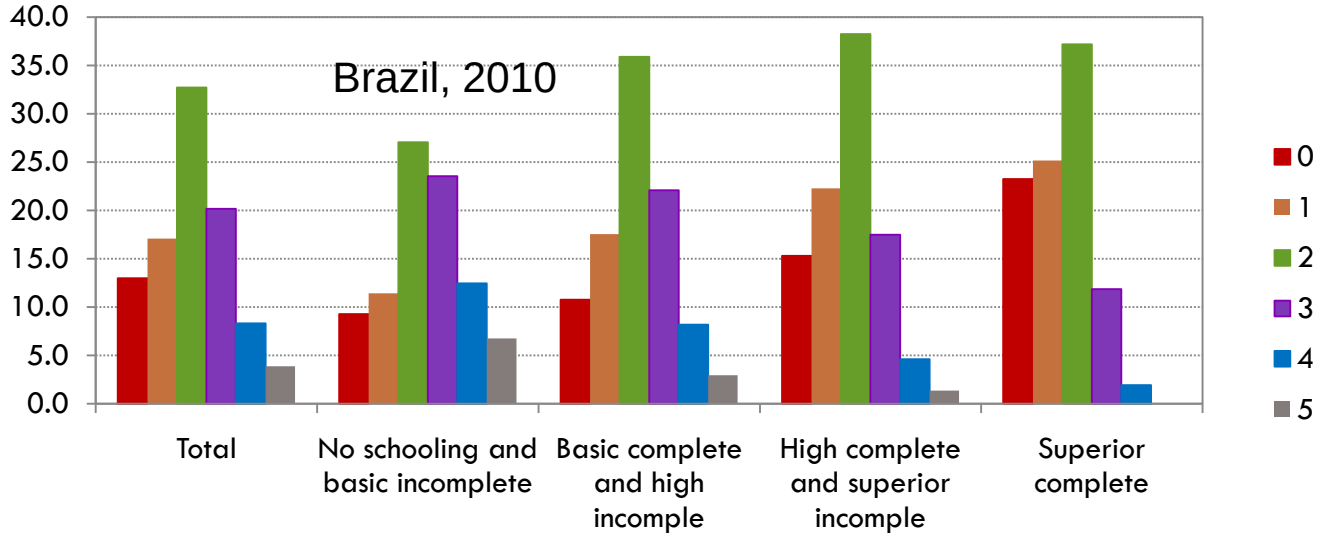
Parity distribution in Latin America

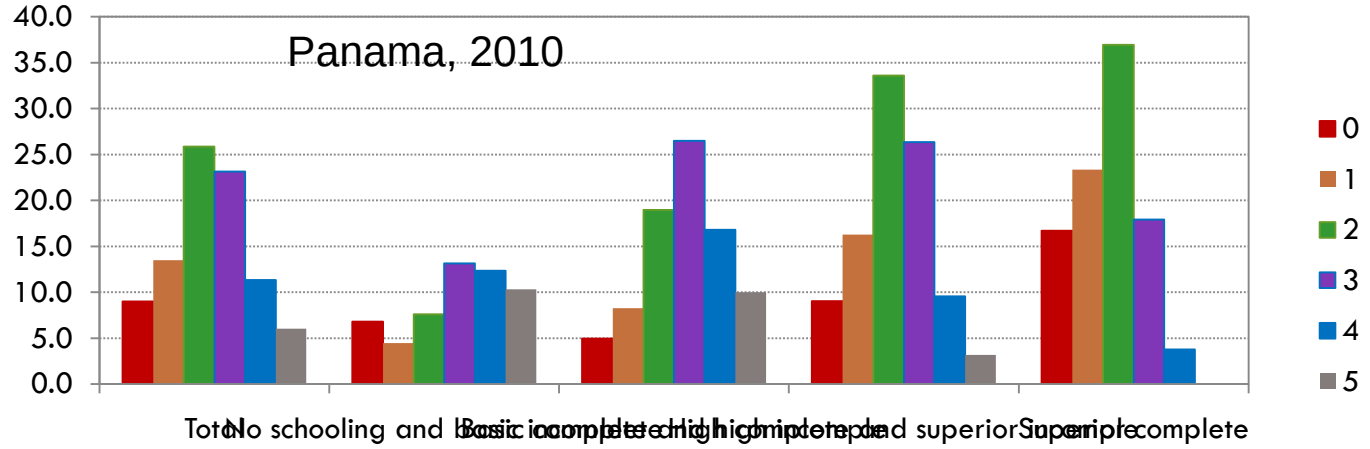
Percentage of women aged 45 to 49 at the census date by number of children ever born for selected countries, circa 2010.



Parity distribution by education

Projected percentage of women aged 40 to 44 at census date by number of children ever born.





40% - zero or one

35% - two

20% - three

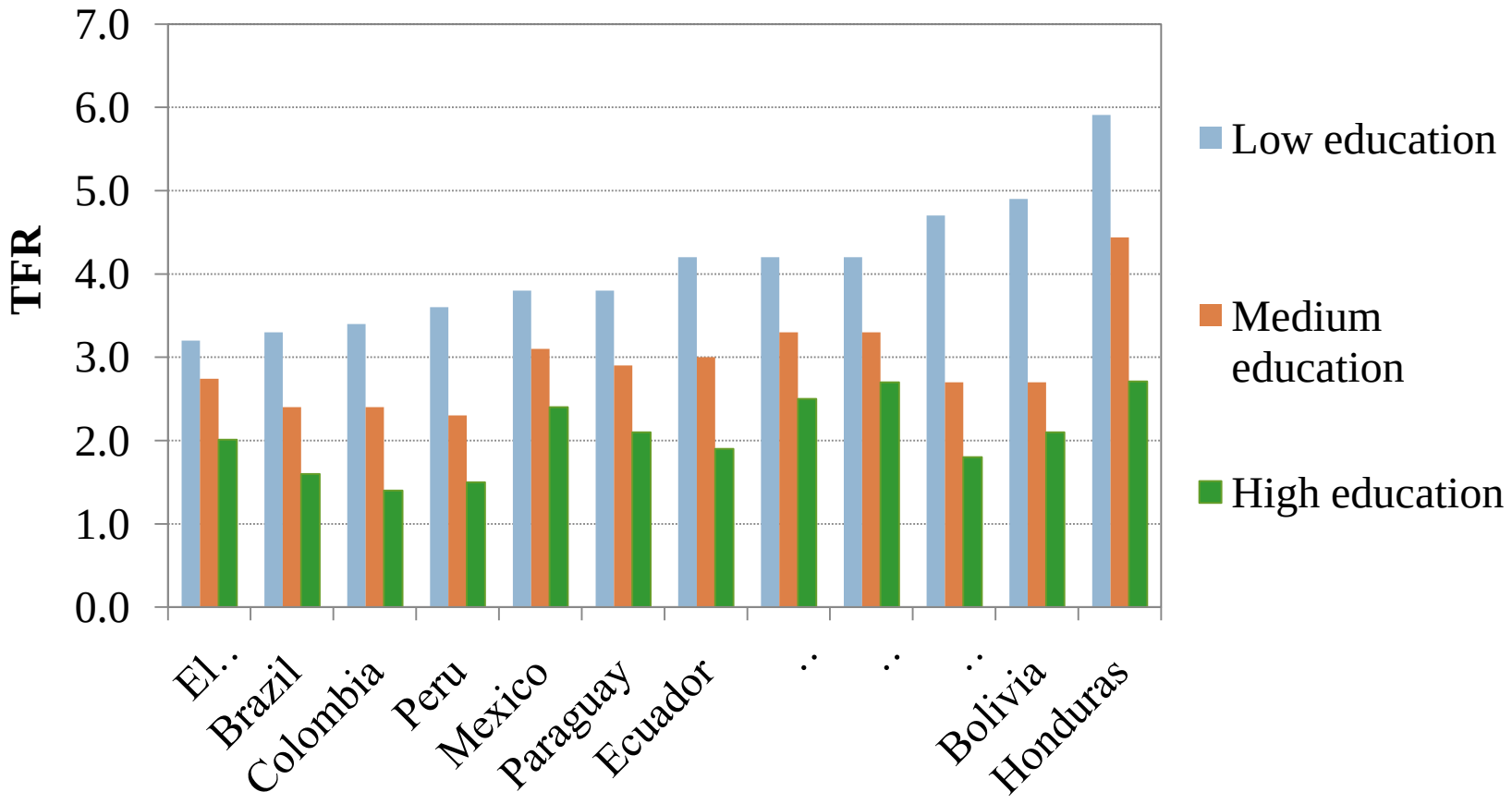
5% average of 4.5

TF=1.78

Does this indicate a path to a third demographic transition → the retreat from childbearing?

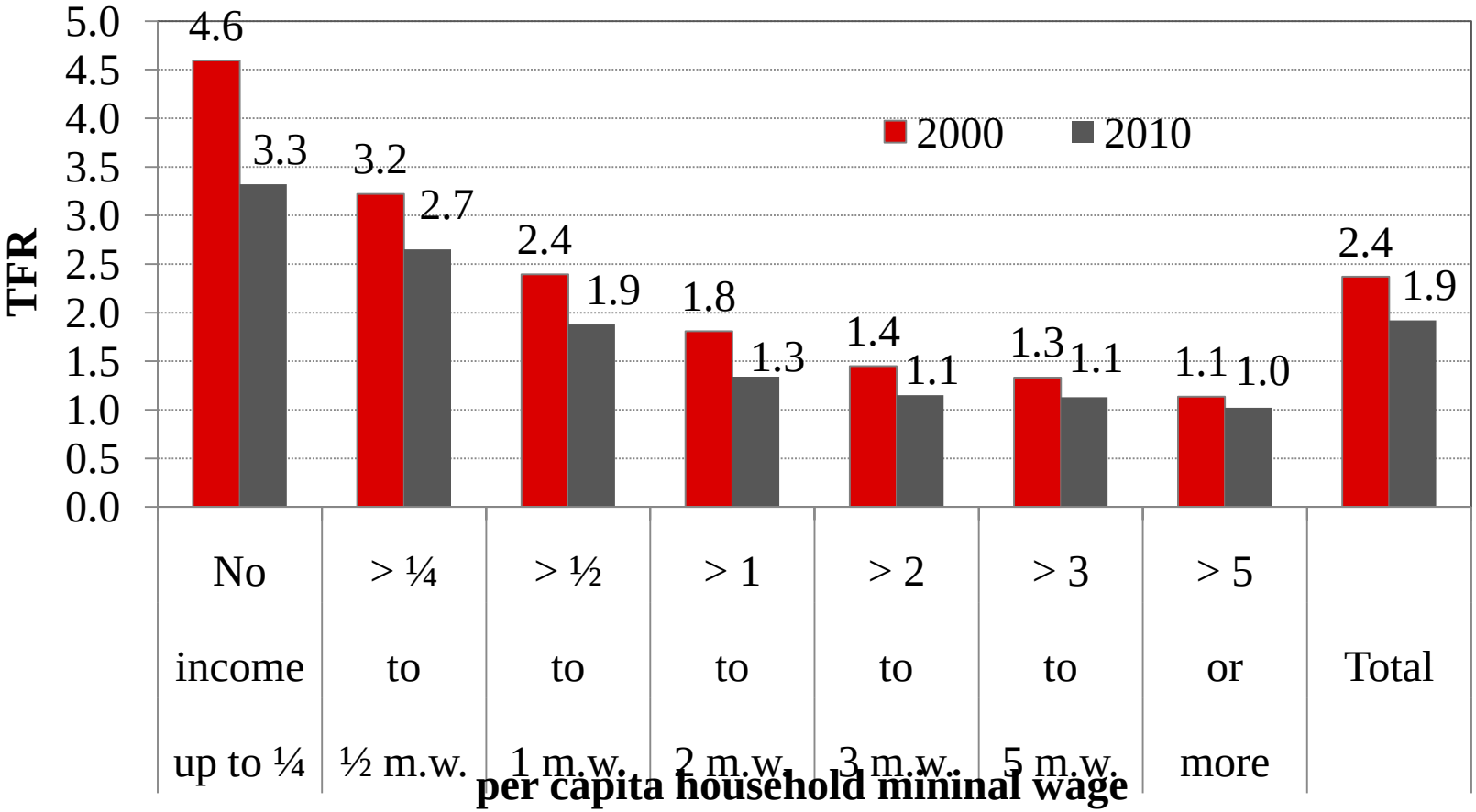
Total fertility by education

Total fertility for selected countries by level of education, Latin America, circa 2005.



Total fertility by income groups Brazil, 2000 and 2010

Total fertility according to categories of average household income per capita, Brazil, 2000 and 2010.



Access to Contraception

- Contraceptive practice in Latin America and the Caribbean occurred even in the **absence of laws and regulations** that could guarantee the rights to universal access to reproductive health.
  - **Restrictions on types of contraceptive methods available** in different countries
  - High **concentration on the market for its provision**.
- Common in all countries: **reproductive planning** has always been closely linked to **maternal** health care and not women's and men's reproductive needs.
- The region is in urgent need of good policies that can assure access to contraceptive methods that are most suitable for each age group and life cycle.
- Still need **comprehensive reproductive health**, including young people, men, and poorest population.
- Although current regulations might explicitly include these population groups in the letter of the law, in practice this is far from reality.

Still high unwanted and misted pregnancies and births – very high unsafe induced abortion

Policy implications of low fertility

- **Fertility decline** has an impact on economic development and gender relations.
- **The continued decline in fertility opens opportunities and challenges**.
  - In 10 years → reduction of 58 million poor people in Latin America,
  - There have been also advances in education, especially in case of women who even reversed the gender gap in education (need policies here!).
  - The changes in age structure facilitated the increase of labour force participation rate, especially for women.
- A continued decrease in total fertility (even to lowest-low levels) will reduce the demographic dependency ratios of children and adolescents and will open opportunity for an increase of the demographic bonus (if well used)
  - This would enable for further advances in education and the reduction of unemployment and informality in the labor market, without substantially reducing the availability of manpower.
- Enormous challenges that have to be faced with an **ageing population**.
  - However, **welfare policies need to seek actuarial balance** (such as increasing the minimum retirement age) and should **not plan pro-natalist policies** to solve the intergenerational flow of resources and wealth.
  - Also, other challenges such as health care, also must be addressed within a framework of rights, and avoiding gender-biased policies

Concluding…

- The Cairo ICPD Programme of Action was clear in its view of women as under-privileged and discriminated members of society and its consequent defense of women's empowerment and autonomy;
- Latin America has long been perceived as a region marked by "machismo" and as heir to a form of social organization dominated by patriarchal behaviour. This structure is generally associated with conservative values, wherein men oppose women's rights and women's pursuit of things that fall outside of traditional gender roles. Yet there are clear signs of breakthroughs in gender equality in the region;
- These have had effects on fertility decline and will continue to bring fertility to very low levels, as opposed to some regions in India, where women still have very low rates of labour force participation, and it is even decreasing recently;
- As far as reproduction is concerned in Latin America, women are still a long way from sharing the responsibilities of bringing up children equally with men;
- Bridging this gap involves giving full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights to young people and bringing men on board as full co-participants in both childbearing and childrearing..

Thanks!

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