

Educational Outcomes of Immigrant Children and Youth and Children of Immigrants in Mexico*

[English Version]

Resultados educativos de niñas, niños y jóvenes inmigrantes e hijos de inmigrantes en México

Resultados educacionais de meninas, meninos e jovens imigrantes e filhos de imigrantes no México

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Sandra Milena Munevar-Meneses**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1015-8082>

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Colombia

Silvia Giorguli Saucedo***

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4573-9389>

Mexico

Abstract

Objective: The article compares the educational outcomes of immigrant children and youth in Mexico, including those who are part of generation 1.5 and generation 2.0 (born in Mexico to foreign parents), and generation 2.5 (born in Mexico to mixed-parentage unions where one parent is Mexican).

Methodology: A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on the characteristics

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** PhD in Population Studies. Master in Population and Development from Flacso-Mexico. Economist. El Colegio de México. Email: samunevar@colmex.mx

*** PhD in Sociology with a specialty in Population Studies from Brown University. Master in Demography from El Colegio de México. Demographer and sociologist. Currently president of El Colegio de México and a professor-researcher at the same institution. Email: sgiorguli@colmex.mx

of children and youth aged 5 to 17 years, as well as their households and living contexts, using data from the Mexico Population and Housing Census 2020. **Results:** Gaps were identified in school attendance and educational lag based on the children's birthplace and their parents' country of origin (Mexico or another country), with fewer disadvantages observed among children from mixed (national and foreign) unions. **Conclusions:** In Mexico, education is compulsory up to upper secondary education. However, differences in school attendance and performance have been identified among the various migrant generation groups, ranging from primary to upper secondary education. This research offers a detailed exploration of the educational situation of immigrant children and children of immigrants and their integration processes into Mexico's educational system.

Keywords: school attendance; educational gap; immigration; migrant children and youth; Mexico (obtained from the ERIC thesaurus).

Resumen

Objetivo: el artículo compara los resultados educativos de niños, niñas y jóvenes (NNJ) inmigrantes en México (generación 1.5) y aquellos nacidos en territorio mexicano con ascendencia migratoria, cuyos padres son extranjeros en México (generación 2.0) o hijas/os de uniones mixtas donde uno de los progenitores es mexicano (generación 2.5).

Metodología: se realiza un análisis estadístico descriptivo de las características de los NNJ de 5 a 17 años, sus hogares y el contexto donde viven, a partir de los datos del Censo de Población y Vivienda de México 2020. **Resultados:** se encontraron brechas en la asistencia y rezago escolar de los NNJ a partir de su lugar de nacimiento, al lugar de nacimiento de los padres (México u otro país), con menores desventajas entre aquellos menores provenientes de uniones mixtas (nacionales-extranjeros). **Conclusiones:** en México, la educación es obligatoria hasta la media superior, sin embargo, entre los distintos grupos de generaciones migrantes se han encontrado diferencias tanto en la asistencia como en el desempeño escolar, desde la educación primaria hasta la media superior. Este trabajo abre espacio para una exploración más detallada de la situación educativa de NNJ inmigrantes o hijos de inmigrantes, y su proceso de integración a la escuela en México.

Palabras clave: asistencia escolar; brecha educativa; inmigración; niñas, niños y jóvenes migrantes; México (obtenidos del tesoro ERIC).

Resumo

Objetivo: O artigo compara os resultados educacionais de meninas, meninos e jovens (MMJ) imigrantes no México (geração 1.5) e daqueles nascidos em território mexicano com ascendência migratória, cujos pais são estrangeiros no México (geração 2.0) ou filhos de uniões mistas em que um dos progenitores é mexicano (geração 2.5).

Metodologia: Realiza-se uma análise estatística descritiva das características dos MMJ de 5 a 17 anos, de seus lares e do contexto em que vivem, com base nos dados do Censo de População e Habitação do México de 2020. **Resultados:** Foram identificadas disparidades na frequência escolar e no atraso educacional dos MMJ, considerando seu local de nascimento e o país de origem de seus pais (México ou outro país), com menores desvantagens entre aqueles provenientes de uniões mistas (nacionais-estrangeiros). **Conclusões:** No México, a educação é obrigatória até o ensino médio, no entanto, entre os diferentes grupos de gerações migrantes, observam-se diferenças tanto na frequência quanto no desempenho escolar, desde o ensino fundamental até o ensino médio. Este estudo abre espaço para uma exploração mais detalhada da situação educacional dos MMJ imigrantes ou filhos de imigrantes e de seu processo de integração escolar no México.

Palavras-chave: frequência escolar; desigualdade educacional; imigração; meninas, meninos e jovens migrantes; México (obtidos do tesouro ERIC).

Introduction

The various domains in which foreigners are integrated into their host contexts have been a focus of interest in migratory studies. Examining the integration experiences of migrants and a subsequent identification of the long-term consequences for first and second generations immigrant children was the initial focus (Portes & Hao, 2004). Analyzing the outcomes of migrant children and youth, and children of migrants in destination societies is associated with the long-term effects of immigration (Portes et al., 2009). While research in the United States and Europe has provided valuable insights on how migrants and their children integrate into work, family, and social and educational contexts in host countries, research in other arrival contexts is still scarce. Additionally, some particularities make the Mexican case one of interest.

Although Mexico plays a remarkable role as a country of emigration, it is a convergence country for other migration flows, including immigration. Although foreigners in Mexico represent a small percentage of the country's total population (1.0%, according to the 2020 population census, approximately 1.2 million people), recently, there has been a significant increase, primarily among individuals from Latin America and the Caribbean (Angoa & Giorguli, 2021).

Unlike other contexts, in terms of wages and economic integration, Central American (Meza & Pederzini, 2020; 2022) and Latin American (Navarrete-Suárez & Masferrer, 2022) migrants in Mexico achieve better outcomes compared to non-migrants; however, these advantages tend to decrease over time. Concerning birthplace, immigrants to Mexico born in countries other than the United States are more likely to work, while their Mexican counterparts continue in school (Escoto & Masferrer, 2021). Similarly, the context of migration reception exhibits a duality. On the one hand, it is inclusive in terms of national and international regulations, as evidenced by the country's participation in international agreements related to migrants. On the other hand, it is exclusionary in the development and implementation of public policies that discriminate against migrants, limiting their access to basic services and labor markets (Sánchez-Montijano, 2022).

The presence of foreign children, youth, and second-generation immigrants remains a rather underexplored area of immigration research in Mexico (Rodríguez, 2010). Education is a key focus because it serves as one of the first spaces of socialization for immigrant children and youth in the destination country and is an indicator of their future well-being (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2015). Furthermore, educational achievement has been a measure of the incorporation and integration of immigrants into destination societies (Kirui &

Kao, 2018). From this perspective, the objective is to analyze the participation of children and adolescents in the Mexican educational system and, through this lens, gain insights into the integration of both immigrant children and immigrant parents with Mexican-born children into Mexican society.

One of the challenges lies in the empirical conceptualization of first- and second-generation immigrants, considering the unique characteristics of migratory flows to, from, and through Mexico, as well as how children and youth engage with migration processes. Although theoretical, conceptual, and empirical frameworks in the United States have mainly guided how to refer to the first and second generations (Rumbaut, 2004), in different contexts, such as Mexico, these definitions still need to be reevaluated. According to Giorguli (2022), children and youth exposed to migration in Mexico can be classified into three main groups: (i) minors who remain in communities of origin affected by migration;¹ (ii) those who migrate, including emigrants to the United States, return migrants, children and youth born in the United States who migrate to Mexico and individuals from other countries who come to reside in Mexico; (iii) finally, second-generation children and youth residing in Mexico.

In this context, the proposed categories served two distinct purposes. The first delved into the conceptual classification groups between immigrants and their children (first and second generations) in Mexico.² The second analyzed the profiles of immigrant children and youth, and children of immigrants in Mexico, from quantifying the size of the cohort and, mainly, detailing their educational similarities and differences compared to non-migrant Mexican children and youth.³ The second intention of this work is to determine the size of this population within the school population in Mexico and to provide an initial assessment of the challenges the Mexican educational system might face in ensuring their right to education.

The purpose is to examine specific aspects of immigration in Mexico, focusing on the demographic and family characteristics of migrant children and youth and the children of migrants (second generation). The inequalities in

1 This group is made up of children and adolescents whose parents or relatives have migrated, received remittances, or have been in communities with a high migration incidence (Giorguli, 2022).

2 At the methodological level, a decision was made to not include girls, boys and young people born in Mexico and with return migration experience, given that the parents' place of birth is Mexico. Although the disadvantages in the educational outcomes of this group of return migrants have been widely documented, in Aguilar, 2014, 2021 among others; Aguilar & Jacobo, 2020; Camacho & Vargas-Valle, 2017; Vargas-Valle & Camacho, 2015; Zúñiga & Giorguli, 2019.

3 The differences between age groups (5-11, 12-14 15-17) and migrant generations (non-migrant, US-born, generation 1.5, 2.0, and 2.5) presented throughout the text are statistically significant.

their school integration processes, comparing the first and second generations of migrants with the non-migrant population, are also examined.

This is an initial approach to first and second generations of immigrants in Mexico. Using the most recent Mexico Population Census, this descriptive analysis highlights aspects related to the relationship between international migration, education, and mixed unions. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of these issues in migration destination contexts that differ from those traditionally studied, such as the United States or Europe.

Education, International Migration, and Migrant Generations

Education is recognized as a fundamental human right for children,⁴ contributing to a holistic development of their cognitive, social-emotional, and physical capacities and preparing them for adult life (National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE), 2019).

School attendance is a necessary condition to avoid educational lag and illiteracy. This has been associated with individual and family characteristics of children and youth, the size of their locality, the poverty conditions, and the degree of marginalization (INEE, 2019). The lack of attendance and the educational lag are greater in rural localities than urban localities (Solís, 2010). Regional inequalities in access to education prevail in Mexico, with more equitable conditions in the metropolitan area of the Valley of Mexico and the border states with the United States compared to the southern states, where the educational disparities are more pronounced (Favila & Navarro, 2017).

International migration is also considered in the analysis of educational inequality in Mexico, particularly concerning two populations of interest in this study. The first population comprises migrant children who move from one country to another, while the second population includes the children of immigrants. The first case involves a migration process at school age that can disrupt educational trajectories and require adaptation to new environments, potentially causing a late start of the school year or delays due to the compulsory administrative procedures (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). The second case comprises immigrant parents and their children who may face a lack of or limited information about accessing the educational system, as well as obstacles

4 Ratified in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, education is a fundamental tool for the protection of human dignity (United Nations, 1948).

or difficulties in enrolling their children and youth in schools (Fernández et al., 2012).

In the case of migrant children and youth who enter Mexico, the educational system is not prepared to guarantee their integration. Migrant children and youth often face little or no access to documentation that verifies their residency and identity, a lack of awareness about school enrollment processes, and a limited availability of educational opportunities in rural communities. These factors can contribute to higher dropout rates and reduced school attendance among school-age children (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2023). This occurs even though Mexican legislation establishes the right to education for everyone, regardless of immigration status.⁵

Regarding this study background, the relationship between education and migration in Mexico has mainly focused on the educational performance of Mexican migrant children and youth in the United States (Jensen et al., 2016; Zúñiga & Carrillo, 2020) and on the educational insertion of Mexican migrant children and youth returning from the United States. Research has emphasized that children and youth with migratory experience show lower school attendance rates compared to those without migratory experiences (Aguilar, 2014, 2021; Aguilar & Jacobo, 2020; Camacho & Vargas-Valle, 2017; Vargas-Valle & Camacho, 2015; Zúñiga & Giorguli, 2019; Vargas-Valle & Aguilar, 2020). Along with school absenteeism, migrant children and youth exhibit higher percentages of educational lag compared to non-migrants (Vargas-Valle, 2023; Aguilar, 2021).

To a lesser extent, the educational outcomes of other migrant population groups in Mexico have been studied. Children and youth from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador in Mexico show higher rates of school absenteeism compared to non-migrants (Aguilar & Giorguli, 2016). Migrants from the United States and children and youth from Central America display differences concerning the time of arrival in Mexico. Children and youth who migrated more than five years before the census survey exhibited higher school attendance percentages and lower rates of educational lag compared to those who had spent less time in the Mexican territory (Vargas-Valle, 2023).

Access to the educational system of migrant children and youth is influenced by family network structures, the student's birth country, school trajectories, the school duration in both countries, the quality of education received in each

5 In recent years, Mexican legislation has presented adjustments in terms of access to education for migrant children and adolescents, among others. In 2015, the apostille and translation into educational credentials abroad were eliminated (Jacobo-Suárez, 2017). However, the right to education of migrants has been limited by the lack of adaptability to the educational trajectories of children and adolescents with migratory experiences (Zúñiga & Giorguli, 2019).

system, and language use in schools and daily life (Vargas-Valle, 2018). This dynamic potentially interacts with structural barriers in the Mexican educational system (Vargas-Valle, 2018) and the individual characteristics of migrant children and youth and their families. Several adverse factors hinder the adaptation and integration of migrant students into the educational system, limiting the development of targeted actions to ensure their access to education and continued school attendance. Among these factors are the bureaucratization and inflexibility of the educational system and the lack of information and training for teachers in schools who receive migrants from other countries.

Similarly, migration may affect subsequent generations of the migrant's descendants born in countries of destination. One explanation for the academic disadvantages faced by children of migrants compared to their non-migrant peers is the difference in social and cultural capital, stemming from the diverse backgrounds and heterogeneities that migrants bring to their country of destination (Cerrutti & Binstock, 2009). Additionally, factors such as living in a two-parent household (with both biological parents) and the parents' socioeconomic status also play a relevant role (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

In the context of migration, a key area of interest is the integration of migrants in their destination communities, recognizing that this process is not linear and "is influenced by factors such as age at arrival, parents' birth country, and characteristics of the social context of the destination, including migration policies" (Aguilar, 2021, p. 84). Characteristics like age at migration and birthplace of immigrant children and youth and their parents enable the classification of migrants into generational groups (Rumbaut, 2004).

This study analyzes the educational outcomes of migrant children and youth from diverse contexts, such as the United States and other regions. Unlike previous research, this analysis examines migrant generations, recognizing that children and youth may experience migration through their migratory displacement or because of their parents' prior migratory flows (Giorguli, 2022). Similarly, this study explores both school attendance and educational lag, measuring the retention and academic progress of children and youth participating in the Mexican educational system. In this case, both migrant children and youth in Mexico are considered children of international migrants who were born in Mexican territory. This is relevant to understanding the educational integration processes of migrants and their descendants in Mexico.

Socio-demographic Profile According to Migrant Generation

Children and youth may find themselves in diverse migration contexts, either through their migration to a new country or as members of families with migratory experience. One analytical strategy to reflect on children and youth associated with migration processes is the construction of categories according to their age, birthplace, and their parents' birthplace (Rumbaut, 2004). Thus, building on previous research that empirically defines migrant generations (Rumbaut, 2004) and studies that shed light on specific insights for the Mexican case (Aguilar, 2014; Aguilar & Jacobo, 2020; Zúñiga & Giorguli, 2019), this research classifies migrant generations into the following school-age population groups (from five to 17 years):

- **Non-migrant:** children and youth born in Mexico with both parents being Mexican or with the only parent residing at household being Mexican. In this case, the sample was limited to children and youth who reported residing in Mexican territory five years prior.
- **Born in the United States:** Children born in the United States Territory were excluded from the immigrant group since, in most cases, they are the children of Mexican parents.⁶
- **Generation 1.5:** born in another country – different from the United States.
- **Generation 2.0:** children and youth born in Mexico with both parents being immigrants or the only parent residing in the household being a foreigner.
- **Generation 2.5:** Children and youth born in Mexico to mixed unions, either with a Mexican mother and an immigrant father or an immigrant mother and a Mexican father.

While this classification aims to enhance the diversity of immigration in Mexico, it has limitations, including the sample size, which restricts the possibility of joint disaggregation by age and parents' country of origin, and the lack of information on the birthplace of both parents, regardless of whether they

⁶ Zúñiga and Giorguli (2019) have denoted this generation as 0.5, given that it recovers the sense of migration from north to south, and the arrival of the parents in the country. According to Mexican law, this population is entitled to Mexican citizenship by birth.

reside in the household. The data available in the expanded questionnaire of the 2020 Population and Housing Census provided by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2020) is used to reach the objectives. Based on this information, the analysis comprises a sample of 3,727,478 observations, representing a population of 28,158,830 girls, boys, and adolescents. Annex 1 provides detailed information on the methodological considerations, limitations, and sample selection for the analysis.

Demographic Characteristics

Census estimates indicate that 401,592 children and youth were born in the United States, making them the largest group among migrant generations. Immigrant children and youth from other countries (Generation 1.5) total 42,175, representing just over one-tenth of those born in the United States (see Table 2). The second generation consists mainly of children of mixed unions between Mexican and foreign parents.

The total population of Generation 2.5 is three times larger than that of Generation 2.0. This phenomenon may be associated with the migration of individuals who were single or previously in a union and who, upon arriving in Mexico, formed a partnership with a Mexican. For many parents, both their union and the start of motherhood or fatherhood occurred in Mexico. Similarly, these results underscore the importance of disaggregating, to the extent permitted by census data, second-generation migrants into those with foreign parents and those with one Mexican parent.

Table 1. *Distribution by Sex and Age of Non-migrant Children and Youth, Immigrants, and Children of Immigrants Residing in Mexico (population aged 5 to 17 years).*

Age Group	Migrant Generation				
	Non-migrant	Born USA	Gen. 1.5	Gen. 2.0	Gen. 2.5
Gender					
Women	49.2	49.4	48.8	50.9	48.9
Men	50.8	50.6	51.2	49.1	51.1
Women					
Age (mean in years)	10.9	11.9	10.8	10.2	10.0
Age Groups					
5-11	53.9	40.7	55.6	61.0	65.7
12-14	23.1	33.7	21.7	20.9	18.1
15-17	22.9	25.7	22.7	18.0	16.1
Men					
Age (mean in years)	10.9	11.8	10.9	10.5	9.9
Age Groups					
5-11	54.1	41.4	55.0	60.5	66.1
12-14	23.1	33.8	22.8	19.9	18.9
15-17	22.8	24.7	22.2	19.6	14.9
Total	27,585,080	401,592	42,175	33,133	96,850

Source: authors' calculations from the *Mexico Population and Housing Census 2020*. Weighted values. The percentages add up to 100% per column for each gender. Note: Gen: Generation.

Notable among the characteristics is the equitable gender distribution, which is consistently similar across all the analyzed population groups. On average, both Mexican and immigrant children and young people are between 10 and 11 years old, except children born in the United States who are one year older. Second-generation children and youth (2.0 and 2.5) are primarily concentrated in the 5-11 age range. When they enroll in the educational system, they do so at levels where basic education is nearly universal, with age as an important indicator of both school attendance and retention.

Table 2. *Region and Country of Birth of Migrant Children Born in the United States and Generation 1.5 in Mexico, 2020.*

Region/Country	Total
North America	
United States	401,592
Canada	3,097
Central America	
Guatemala	6,914
Honduras	5,075
El Salvador	2,083
Other countries in Central America	1,699
Caribbean	
Cuba	1,433
Other Caribbean countries	181
South America	
Venezuela	7,851
Colombia	2,030
Argentina	1,520
Other South American countries	3,341
Other regions	
Spain	1,971
Other immigrants	4,980
Total	443,767

Source: authors' calculations from the *Mexico Population and Housing Census 2020*.
 Note: For the disaggregation by country, only samples with more than 30 observations were considered. Information was disaggregated for the countries where this criterion was met; however, when this was not possible, the data was aggregated by region of origin.

Most foreign-born non-US children and youth come from Latin America, primarily from Venezuela (18.6%), Guatemala (16.3%), and Honduras (12.0%). The country of origin of immigrant children and youth in Mexico offers insights into their educational opportunities before migration, as well as the selective migration profiles associated with certain countries. Based on the Intercensal Survey, Pardo and Dávila-Cervantes (2019) demonstrated that Central Americans aged 18 and over exhibit higher percentages at the lowest levels of schooling, meaning they have no formal or only incomplete primary education. South Americans reported the highest levels of schooling, with nearly two-thirds of their population holding a bachelor's degree or higher degrees. Similarly, the distribution of children and youth by country of origin reflects the immigration processes to Mexico.

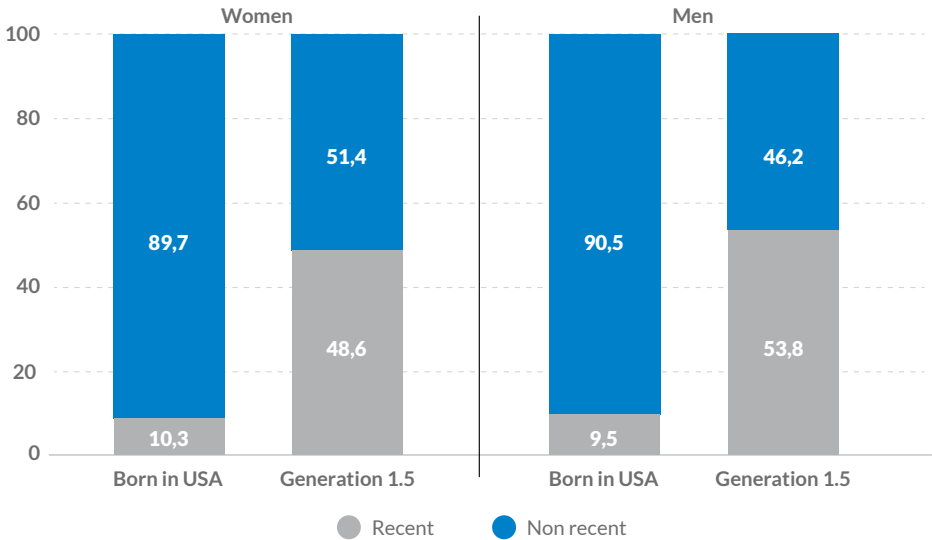


Figure 1. *Recent and Non-recent Migration of Immigrant Children and Youth Residing in Mexico Based on Gender.*

Source: authors' calculations from the Mexico Population and Housing Census 2020.
Note: for each category, observations that did not report country of residence five years before the census survey were excluded, corresponding to less than 0.05% of the weighted sample. Recent migrants refer to individuals who arrived in Mexico between 2015 and 2020.

By arrival period, nine out of 10 individuals born in the United States arrived in Mexico more than five years ago. As for Generation 1.5, which includes immigrant children and youth from other countries, the majority (53.8%) of males arrived in Mexico after 2015, while a slight majority of females arrived in previous decades. In addition to age, the length of stay in destination societies is a key factor in understanding integration processes. The expectation is that, as individuals remain in Mexico longer, they and their immigrant and native-born children may increasingly participate in various aspects of educational, work, and social life. Escoto and Masferrer (2021), affirm that the educational and labor participation of immigrants born in the United States are associated with the length of time they have spent in Mexican territory. Individuals who have recently arrived would be less likely to be enrolled in school compared to non-recent US migrants.

Family Context

This section analyzes relevant family variables that complement the characteristics of children and youth, which are, in turn, associated with educational outcomes. An advantage of census data is its ability to provide identifiers for the mother, father, or spouse residing within the same household. These variables enable the identification of parent and child relationships beyond the kinship ties to the head of the household, enabling the construction of matched pairs by associating their characteristics. This is relevant to the proposed objectives, as it enables the identification of migrant generations based on the birth of school-age children and youth and the migratory backgrounds of their parents, as well as the analysis of mixed unions between immigrants and foreigners.

A limitation is that the data only allows for linking information of individuals residing within the same household, thus introducing biases when linking the information of parents and partners present at the time of the census survey. As a precaution, for second-generation migrants (2.0 and 2.5), the analysis considers only the current union, specifically among heterosexual couples residing with their children in the same household at the time of the census.

Table 3. Family Arrangements of Non-migrant Children and Youth, Immigrants and Children of Immigrants in Mexico, 2020.

Family variables	Migrant Generation				
	Non-migrant	Born USA	Gen. 1.5	Gen. 2.0	Gen 2.5
Household size					
1-4	40.7	44.7	52.6	49.0	43.2
5-7	48.0	48.9	41.0	38.5	49.4
8 and over	11.3	6.4	6.4	12.5	7.4
Relationship to Head of Household					
Daughter/son	77.8	82.1	84.6	85.8	92.5
Granddaughter/ Grandson	18.4	14.8	5.4	10.1	6.7
Other kinship	3.6	2.9	9.3	3.0	0.80
Unrelated	0.1	0.1	0.7	1.0	-
Parental co-residency					
Mother only	23.1	28.3	24.4	49.5	-
Father only	3.6	4.2	4.0	11.0	-
Resides with both parents	66.2	61.0	63.4	39.5	100.0
None	7.0	6.6	8.1	-	-

Source: authors' calculations from the *Mexico Population and Housing Census 2020*.

Note: Co-residency with both parents is 100% for Generation 2.5 due to the criteria established for defining this group; determining the parents' countries of birth was only possible when both parents resided in the same household. Note: Gen: Generation.

The number of household members reflects the developmental stage of the household—whether in the phases of exposure, formation, or dissolution—and provides insight into the presence of other relatives and the competition for resources among children and youth within the same household. The results for immigrants and their children indicate that the majority reside in households with seven or fewer members, a characteristic typical of the household formation stage. Most are daughters or sons of the head of the household, although 14.8% of those born in the United States and 10.1% of Generation 2.0 are grandchildren. For individuals born in the United States, a small rate does not live with either parent and are more likely to reside with their grandparents (Masferrer et al., 2019). Generation 2.0 has the lowest rate of all groups of interest residing with both parents (39.5%), with nearly half living exclusively with an immigrant mother.

Geographical Context

Migrant children and youth and children of immigrants are unevenly distributed across the Mexican territory. Most children and youth live in urban areas, with higher rates among Generations 1.5 and 2.5. Nearly 85.0% reside in localities with more than 2,500 inhabitants. Regarding regional distribution, a remarkable rate of migrant children and youth born in the United States reside in the Northern Border region, which reflects a return pattern of Mexicans and their presence in the border states. Meanwhile, a significant rate (34.2%) of children and youth from Generation 1.5 live in the central zone, including Mexico City. For Generation 2.0 children and youth, nearly half (49.6%) reside in the South-Southeastern states, including those along the Mexico-Guatemala border, a traditional destination for Guatemalan populations and, more recently, for other Central American groups. Finally, Generation 2.5 is evenly distributed across the four regions.

Table 4. *Geographic Location of Immigrant Children and Daughters/Sons of Immigrants in Mexico, 2020.*

Geographical Location	Migrant Generation				
	Non-migrant	Born USA	Gen. 1.5	Gen. 2.0	Gen. 2.5
Place of residence					
Rural	23.8	23.1	15.0	26.3	15.6
Urban	76.2	76.9	85.0	73.7	84.4
Region of Residence					
Northern Border	17.9	41.5	22.0	16.0	26.4
North	26.1	31.2	14.4	11.5	21.2
Central	38.0	18.9	34.2	22.9	27.3
South-southeast	18.1	8.4	29.3	49.6	25.1

Source: authors' calculations from the *Population and Housing Census of Mexico, 2020*.
Note: "Rural" refers to towns with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants. In the Northern Border region of residence, the states of Baja California, Baja California Sur, Coahuila de Zaragoza, Chihuahua Nuevo León, Sonora, and Tamaulipas were grouped. In the North: Aguascalientes, Colima, Durango, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán de Ocampo, Nayarit, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Zacatecas. In *Central*: State of Mexico, Mexico City, Hidalgo, Morelos, Puebla, Querétaro, Tlaxcala, Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave. In *the south-southeast*: Campeche, Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, and Yucatan.

Residence, whether in rural or urban areas and across different regions of Mexican territory, is a critical factor in understanding the educational inclusion opportunities for the migrant population and children of immigrants. This denotes the presence of immigrant populations and second generations across the Mexican territory, although with higher percentages in the border areas. The distribution of the immigrant population and children and youth within migration contexts, including immigrants and children of foreigners, indicates that their educational opportunities will largely depend on their place of residence, reflecting existing educational inequalities in Mexico. With marked differences between regions (Giorguli et al., 2010; Mier, Terán & Rabell, 2002). These are associated with the educational offer available and the quality of education.

School Attendance and Educational Lag Based on Generations of Migrants

School attendance is an indicator of the (re)entry into the educational system of immigrant children and youth, thus being one of the first indicators of educational integration. One advantage of the census is the data on school attendance and the highest level of education completed (INEGI, 2021). The combination of school attendance and the last grade completed enables the identification of whether enrolled children and youth attend the appropriate level for their age, based on the normative age ranges for primary, secondary, and upper secondary education. Based on these educational levels, age groups are formed: five to 11 years for primary school, 12 to 14 years for secondary school, and 15 to 17 years for upper secondary school.

In Mexico, a large proportion of non-migrant children and youth, immigrants, and children of migrants participate significantly in the educational system, although there are noteworthy contrasts between these groups. Among children aged five to 11, non-migrants, those born in the United States, and children of migrants with a Mexican parent (Generation 2.5) exhibit near-universal school participation, with rates close to or exceeding 90%. In contrast, foreign-born children and youth (Generation 1.5) have a non-attendance rate of 20.9%. Individuals born in Mexico to two foreign parents (Generation 2.0) display lower school attendance rates than their non-migrant peers and those from Generation 2.5. However, their attendance is not as low as that of foreign-born individuals.

A similar pattern of differences is observed among children and youth aged 12 to 14. The advantage of school participation among those born in the United States persists, while, at the other end of the spectrum, migrant children and youth (Generation 1.5) continue to exhibit notably lower school attendance. In the older age group (15 to 17), school attendance rates decrease considerably across

all population categories. This trend is a distinct characteristic influenced by the transition to upper secondary education, temporary interruptions in studies, the combination of education with paid work, or school dropout. In this case, children of mixed unions display the highest levels of school attendance, with rates that are even ten percentage points higher than those of non-migrants between 15 and 17 years. Meanwhile, approximately four out of 10 children and youth from Generation 1.5 are no longer attending school in Mexico.

These findings indicate that both undertaking a personal migration process and experiencing parental migration may be associated with lower school attendance among children and youth in Mexico, with remarkable differences observed between migrant generation groups. For example, individuals born in the United States appear to be in the opposite situation. This aligns with the proposals of Aguilar and Giorguli (2016) and Vargas-Valle (2023), which enhance lower school attendance rates among migrant children and youth in contrast to non-migrants and smaller gaps among migrants from the United States. However, this measure provides scarce insights into the retention processes and academic progress within the educational system.

Using data on school attendance and the last grade completed, an "educational outcome" indicator is built to measure both the retention and the academic progress of the children and youth participating in the Mexican educational system.⁷ The variable comprises four scenarios: attendance without educational lag, attendance with educational lag, non-attendance without educational lag, and non-attendance with educational lag. Overall, differences between groups persist, with immigrant children and adolescents (Generation 1.5) exhibiting the lowest participation rates in the educational system at the normative age (without educational lag). Remarkably, children and youth born in Mexico to two foreign parents (Generation 2.0) exhibit a high percentage of school attendance with educational lag starting at age 12.

This suggests that while second-generation children and youth exhibit higher rates of school attendance, their academic progress is hindered by grade repetition, delayed school entry, or academic failure. For migrant parents, delayed school entry may be associated with their parents' integration into the workforce or the family's adaptation to new environments. However, this analysis does not include controls for parents' educational achievements. Another possible hypothesis is that the outcome for Generation 2.0 may reflect the lower educational attainment of a significant segment of low-skilled immigrants in Mexico. In any

⁷ The classification of educational results based on the combination of attendance and school lag indicators is based on the proposal made by Aguilar (2014).

case, this finding underscores the need to develop support strategies for children and youth of migrants in Mexico, starting from secondary education.

Migration may influence educational trajectories. On the one hand, for individuals born abroad who now reside in Mexico, migration has involved a change in schooling or daily life and possibly an adjustment process to the new environment, which may create disadvantages in their school participation from an early age. On the other hand, for children and youth, both their own migratory experiences and those of their parents may be associated with lower levels of school attendance. Moreover, for those born abroad, the (re)integration process may present additional barriers. This may be related to requirements such as providing documentation or academic records for those who previously attended school outside of Mexico, as well as parents' lack of awareness of children's and youth's rights to access the educational system regardless of their immigration status.

Table 5. *Educational Results of Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants in Mexico, 2020.*

Age group	School attendance	Non-migrant	Born USA	Gen. 1.5	Gen. 2.0	Gen. 2.5
8-11 years	Attend without educational lag	91.4	92.6	64.5	82.6	88.3
	Attend with educational lag	2.5	2.6	6.8	4.0	3.2
	Does not attend without educational lag	5.1	4.2	19.3	9.7	7.4
	Does not attend with educational lag	0.9	0.5	9.3	3.6	1.1
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
12-14 years	Attend without educational lag	81.2	88.2	53.1	67.7	80.7
	Attend with educational lag	5.4	4.7	13.5	12.0	7.1
	Does not attend without educational lag	8.0	5.2	9.6	9.9	6.9
	Does not attend with educational lag	5.4	1.8	23.8	10.3	5.2
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
15-17 years	Attend without educational lag	58.4	68.4	37.7	48.1	67.8
	Attend with educational lag	6.3	6.4	10.6	12.2	7.3
	Does not attend without educational lag	13.6	14.0	10.0	10.9	9.7
	Does not attend with educational lag	21.7	11.1	41.6	28.7	15.2
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: authors' calculations from the Population and Housing Census of Mexico, 2020.

Children of mixed unions tend to remain in the educational system at higher rates compared to the other three migrant generation groups and those born in the United States. From the youngest ages, there appears to be a certain preference for entering and remaining in the educational system. However, for non-migrant children and youth over 15 years, continuing in upper secondary education is less common, which may be associated with engagement in paid work. As shown in the descriptive statistics, this group also has the highest urban presence. Further research could explore the role of parental educational attainment among Generation 2.5 children as a potential explanatory factor for their better educational outcomes.

Concluding Remarks

In Mexico, although education is compulsory up to the upper secondary level (INEE, 2019), differences in both school attendance and academic performance have been identified among different migrant generation groups. For children and youth born abroad (Generation 1.5), school attendance and no educational lag show lower rates compared to those born in Mexico to migrant parents (Generations 2.0 and 2.5) and to those of the same generation born in the United States.

For Generation 1.5 children and youth, opportunities to participate in the educational system appear to be limited from primary school onwards, with this unfavorable situation becoming more pronounced among older adolescents (15 to 17 years old). Even when regularly enrolled in school, their academic progress is more likely to be characterized by educational lag, possibly due to changing schools from one country to another or being unable to enroll in the appropriate grade level. These findings align with those of Aguilar and Giorguli (2016) concerning Generations 1.0 and 1.5 of Central American migrant children and youth in Mexico. This study includes a broader range of countries, highlighting that migration has a disruptive effect on education for those who move from one country to another, compared to children and youth with migrant ancestry (second generations).

For older children and youth, non-school attendance may be associated with engagement in paid work (Escoto & Masferrer, 2021). Similarly, being a student as an exclusive activity is a condition of *privilege*; those who manage to stay in school have sufficient opportunities and economic resources (Mata, 2020).

The educational outcomes of migrant children and youth, as well as those in migratory contexts, reflect the influence of the migration process on both their

own lives and their parents' experiences. It appears that parents may experience varying degrees of integration, which, in turn, influence the educational performance of migrant children and youth and Mexican-born generations. Based on the analysis of census data, these differences in school experiences draw attention to a population of school-age children who are not fully exercising their right to education, either due to lack of access or challenges in remaining and progressing within the educational system. This initial analysis raises new questions about the potential future of schools and other work or social spaces in Mexico for populations connected to immigration. Similarly, inequalities may be associated with educational gaps between immigrants and children of immigrants, compared to non-migrants, thus widening at older ages or in other aspects of life, such as employment.

This article has provided insights into the relationship between education, migration, and migrant ancestry in Mexico as a country of destination. However, these findings from this exploratory study should be interpreted with caution, given the cross-sectional nature of the data, which offers limited insight into the educational trajectories of both immigrant children and youth and those born in Mexico with migratory descent. For instance, whether the educational lag among those born outside Mexico occurred before or as a result of the migratory movement is unclear. Similarly, while it has been estimated that children of mixed unions exhibit smaller school performance gaps, further research is needed to explore the underlying mechanisms at play—first, in the initial formation of unions between Mexicans and immigrants, and later, in how these unions may produce differentiated effects on the educational experiences of their children. In the Mexican context, there remain aspects to explore through future research using more detailed data or qualitative approaches, which could provide a deeper insight into the differences between first-generation (1.5) and second-generation (2.0 and 2.5) children and youth.

This analysis does not control parents' educational attainment. That the observed results reflect differences in parents' educational profiles or are associated with varying educational opportunities across the country is highly likely. Similarly, there may be differences based on the country and place of origin of children (Generation 1.5) or their parents (for Generations 2.0 and 2.5). The differing patterns observed between children and youth born in the United States and those born in other countries provide an evident clue of how these results are influenced by the country of origin.

This study is an opportunity for a more in-depth exploration of the educational situation of immigrant children and youth and children of immigrants, incorporating additional dimensions of analysis. In this regard, future research agendas should focus on expanding the analysis by gender, examining differences

based on place or country of origin, and considering the influence of urban and rural settings and place of residence in Mexico.

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Annex 1

The selected sample corresponds to school-age children between the ages of five and 17, consisting of 3,727,478 observations. Due to the low coverage and maintaining homogeneity with international educational research, the population of preschool age (before the age of five) was excluded. Similarly, the sample excluded the cases with no information on the variables of interest. Specifically, in sample values, 2,363 were not included in the analyses that did not specify the condition of school attendance; 8,346 that did not report information in the number of years studied; 820 observations that did not report information on the country of birth; and, finally, 949 cases whose family position was domestic worker, relatives of the domestic worker or guests. In total, these cases represent less than 0.5% of the total sample.

According to the migrant generation and age, the sample is distributed as follows:

Table A1. *Sample and Population Value of Census Information According to Migrant Generations.*

Sample						
Age Group	Migrant Generation					Total
	Non-migrant	Born US. A	Jan 1.5	Jan 2.0	Jan 2.5	
5-11	2,004,842	20,591	1,463	1,544	4,948	2,033,388
12-14	841,140	18,796	571	524	1,371	862,402
15-17	816,408	13,167	629	457	1,027	831,688
Total	3,662,390	52,554	2,663	2,525	7,346	3,727,478

Weighted Values						
5-11	14,896,778	164,961	23,323	20,141	63,870	15,169,073
12-14	6,373,155	135,470	9,403	6,767	17,920	6,542,715

Sample						
Age Group	Migrant Generation					Total
	Non-migrant	Born US. A	Jan 1.5	Jan 2.0	Jan 2.5	
15-17	6,315,147	101,161	9,449	6,225	15,060	6,447,042
Total	27,585,080	401,592	42,175	33,133	96,850	28,158,830

Source: Authors' calculations from the Population and Housing Census of Mexico, 2020.

Note: returned Mexican migrant minors (8,156 cases) were excluded from the analysis.

The expanded census questionnaire is based on single-stage, stratified, and cluster sampling (INEGI, 2020). In each variable, having a minimum of 30 observations, with confidence coefficients below 30.0% to determine the accuracy of the estimators, in order for the populations of interest to be statistically representative was ensured.

Regarding work limitations, due to the data source used and the sample sizes, disaggregating immigrant children born in countries other than the United States was not possible. Likewise, given the characteristics of the census, the information is based on people who share the same home, which means that the classification of the generations is based on the place of origin of the father/mother present in the household. This can be problematic due to a possible underestimation in the classification of second generations, especially 2.5, where the absent parent may be Mexican and, given the context of emigration in Mexico, their absence at home is related to mobility to another country. A similar situation occurs with Generation 1.5, when they reside only with the mother or father, since it is unknown whether the parent who does not reside in the home is a foreigner or a Mexican.

In the family context section, the percentage of children living alone with their mother, only with their father, with both or neither was estimated. About six out of ten of the non-migrant children born in the United States and Generation 1.5 live with both parents, while only 39.5% of Mexican-born children with migratory ancestry live with both parents. Despite these limitations, the proposal is considered broad enough to understand the migratory processes (own and family) of children and adolescents and make comparisons of educational outcomes between different generations of migrants, to detail their needs and articulate some proposals of the relationship between international migration, education and mixed unions.