


POPULATION, FAMILIES, AND RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN MEXICO
POPULAÇÃO, FAMÍLIAS E DESIGUALDADES RACIAIS NO MÉXICO
POBLACIÓN, FAMILIAS Y DESIGUALDADES RACIALES EN MÉXICO

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.036-162>

Cristina Gomes¹, Karla Denisse Franco²

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes demographic and socioeconomic aspects that differ between these excluded populations - indigenous and Afro-descendants, in contrast to the rest of the population. Mexico is a multi-ethnic country with a diverse population composed of European descendants, Afro-descendants, and Indigenous groups, the result of thirty thousand years of an evolving nation until the colonial invasion (1519 to 1521), followed by the colonial period (1521 to 1821), the trafficking and slavery of one hundred and fifty thousand African people, the independence wars (1810 to 1821), a Revolution (1910 to 1920) and the consolidation of the constitutional state, which includes eugenics by the Western assimilation of original peoples and African-descendants through education. This study compares three population groups according to their specific demographic variations in civil status, age at marriage, number of children, family structure, and level of education. The objective is to understand how these racialized groups differ in family behavior and the intersections between demographic and household characteristics. The quantitative methodology includes demographic methods to describe the patterns and differences between ethnically racialized groups and to explain how population reproduce racism conforming to structural and family inequalities. The results show that the demographic transition is less accelerated among indigenous and Afro-descendants, related to their lower level of education and other socio-economic vulnerabilities, but also to fertility and family structure and composition, leading to the need for support for the racialized women and elderly in the next decades, and multi-generational families. Conclusions show the need for specific affirmative policies oriented to support families of Indigenous and Afro-descendants.

Keywords: Indigenous. Afro-Descendant. Family. Ethnic-Racial Inequalities.

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa aspectos demográficos e socioeconômicos que diferem entre essas populações excluídas — indígenas e afrodescendentes — em contraste com o restante da população. O México é um país multiétnico, com uma população diversa composta por descendentes de europeus, afrodescendentes e povos indígenas, resultado de trinta mil anos de formação de uma nação em constante evolução até a invasão colonial (1519 a 1521), seguida pelo período colonial (1521 a 1821), pelo tráfico e pela escravização de cento e cinquenta mil pessoas africanas, pelas guerras de independência (1810 a 1821), por uma Revolução (1910 a 1920) e pela consolidação do Estado constitucional, que incluiu a eugenia

¹ Researcher. Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO). México.

E-mail: cristinagomesmx@gmail.com

² Adjunct Research Assistant. Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO). México.

E-mail: kdenisse.franco@gmail.com

por meio da assimilação ocidental dos povos originários e dos afrodescendentes via educação. Este estudo compara três grupos populacionais de acordo com variações demográficas específicas no estado civil, idade ao casamento, número de filhos, estrutura familiar e nível de escolaridade. O objetivo é compreender como esses grupos racializados diferem no comportamento familiar e as interseções entre características demográficas e domiciliares. A metodologia quantitativa inclui métodos demográficos para descrever os padrões e as diferenças entre grupos etnicamente racializados e para explicar como a população reproduz o racismo em conformidade com desigualdades estruturais e familiares. Os resultados mostram que a transição demográfica é menos acelerada entre indígenas e afrodescendentes, relacionada ao menor nível de escolaridade e a outras vulnerabilidades socioeconômicas, mas também à fecundidade e à estrutura e composição familiar, levando à necessidade de apoio às mulheres e aos idosos racializados nas próximas décadas, bem como às famílias multigeracionais. As conclusões apontam para a necessidade de políticas afirmativas específicas voltadas ao apoio às famílias indígenas e afrodescendentes.

Palavras-chave: Indígenas. Afrodescendentes. Família. Desigualdades Étnico-Raciais.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza aspectos demográficos y socioeconómicos que difieren entre estas poblaciones excluidas —indígenas y afrodescendientes— en contraste con el resto de la población. México es un país multiétnico, con una población diversa compuesta por descendientes de europeos, afrodescendientes y pueblos indígenas, resultado de treinta mil años de conformación de una nación en constante evolución hasta la invasión colonial (1519 a 1521), seguida del periodo colonial (1521 a 1821), el tráfico y la esclavización de ciento cincuenta mil personas africanas, las guerras de independencia (1810 a 1821), una Revolución (1910 a 1920) y la consolidación del Estado constitucional, que incluyó la eugenesia mediante la asimilación occidental de los pueblos originarios y de los afrodescendientes a través de la educación. Este estudio compara tres grupos poblacionales de acuerdo con variaciones demográficas específicas en el estado civil, la edad al matrimonio, el número de hijos, la estructura familiar y el nivel educativo. El objetivo es comprender cómo estos grupos racializados difieren en el comportamiento familiar y las intersecciones entre las características demográficas y del hogar. La metodología cuantitativa incluye métodos demográficos para describir los patrones y las diferencias entre grupos étnico-racializados y para explicar cómo la población reproduce el racismo conforme a desigualdades estructurales y familiares. Los resultados muestran que la transición demográfica es menos acelerada entre los pueblos indígenas y los afrodescendientes, relacionada con su menor nivel educativo y otras vulnerabilidades socioeconómicas, pero también con la fecundidad y la estructura y composición familiar, lo que conduce a la necesidad de apoyo a las mujeres y a las personas mayores racializadas en las próximas décadas, así como a las familias multigeneracionales. Las conclusiones evidencian la necesidad de políticas afirmativas específicas orientadas al apoyo de las familias indígenas y afrodescendientes.

Palabras clave: Indígenas. Afrodescendientes. Familia. Desigualdades Étnico-Raciales.

1 INTRODUCTION

In Latin America, Indigenous and Afro-descendant families play a fundamental role in preserving the culture, traditions, and identity of their communities. Indigenous communities belong to more than five hundred ethnic languages and groups (World Bank, 2015), organized into extended kinship systems that include not only parents and children, but also uncles, aunts, grandparents, and community members. The traditional education system is based on oral transmission of knowledge and customs through community ties and networks. They live based on a subsistence economy of traditional agriculture, fishing, and crafts, combined with informal trade and community tourism. Therefore, in Mexico, people self-define themselves Indigenous as people sharing norms, values and culture in households and communities, independent of whether they speak the language. Indigenous identity and population measures rely on self-declaration, considering whether individuals speak an original language and if they self-identify with original values and customs.

2 LANGUAGE AND SELF-ADSCRIPTION

In Mexico, there are 68 Indigenous groups, each speaking their own native language, which together have 364 variants. (INPI, 2019).

In 2020 there were 23.2 million self-declared Indigenous people or 19% of the total population (INEGI, 2022). Mexico is the country with the largest Indigenous population on the American continent. However, only 7.4 million people aged five and older speak an Indigenous language, and 11.8 million live in a household where the head speaks an Indigenous language. Of the Indigenous language speakers, 2.7% are monolingual, and the majority are older women. Integrationist or assimilation policies have managed to reduce the number of Indigenous language speakers. (INALI, 2009; Nolasco, 2021; INEGI, 2022; INEGI 2024; CONAZA, 2023).

The percentage of the Indigenous-speaking population fell from 6.6% in 2010 to 6.1% in 2020. It is worth remembering that in 1930 it was 16%. Indigenous languages are disappearing due to prevalent discrimination (Nolasco, 2021) from colonization, slavery, and continued with eugenics — a Modern pseudoscience that legitimated social Darwinism, the idea of the European supremacy over all other ethnic groups (Ansley, 1997). At the end of the 18th century, the independency of American colonies continued discrimination by eugenics. The legacy of Africans slavery -- justified with Christianity beliefs, was replaced

with the legitimacy of pseudoscience -- Social Darwinism, Modern biology, and genetics. Eugenics was massively financed and implemented by the Western powers around the world as obligatory discipline in the curricula from basic school until post-graduation, as well as among all the scientific, intellectual, and political framework, as well as in social, reproductive, health, family, and migration policies. In Mexico, the integrationist policy legitimized the Western cultural assimilation, forcing the adoption of Spanish as the only official national language and promoting the *mestizo* identity instead of Indigenous identity. All ethnic groups were forced to abandon their languages and to deny their values and customs, continuing historical-colonial discrimination and population decline. The aspiration of *mestizaje* means whitening population through interethnic marriage, legitimizing racism against Non-European people, values, beliefs and practices. (Ansley, 1997; Gomes, 2024).

Mexican ruling elites and dominant classes are mostly of European origin or *mestizos*, while the Indigenous population are those who recognize themselves as descendants of the original population living in Mesoamerica more than 500 years ago, before the Conquest, preserving their language, values, beliefs, and customs, and a sense of belonging with their land and families (Sandrín, 2016; Nolasco, 2021). Despite after 1970 Mexico adopted multicultural legislation and policies, following international agreements, “the elders do not teach the language to subsequent generations to avoid discrimination.” (Nolasco, 2021).

Afro-descendants arrived in Latin America at the beginning of colonization, with the colonizers, and then became widespread through African slavery, to substitute the Indigenous labor force, decimated by colonization. (Darién, 1995). Modern slavery trafficked millions of Africans to Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Central America, and the Caribbean. Colonization and slavery resulted in the displacement and disruption of original families and cultures. Nevertheless, certain communities and individuals maintained ancestral traditions, including music, dance, cuisine, and religions. African families reproduce through matrilineal ties and networks of mutual support, working mostly in informal works and cultural economy, even facing structural racism, stigmatization, and vulnerable social conditions. Afro-descendants are particularly exposed to social and racial violence, and some groups like *quilombolas* (descendants of escaped slaves) fight for land ownership, and, like the Indigenous, they were also displaced from the territories where they have lived for centuries (Gomes, 2024; Lezama 2023; Valdivieso, 2016 Velasco et al, 2014; Gandelman, 2011; Bello and Rangel, 2002; Navarrete, 2004).

In 2020, Afro-Mexicans total 2.6 million or 2% of the Mexican population (INEGI, 2024). Structural racism has predominated with slavery and continued through eugenics, which recognized only Indigenous and Euro-descendants as composing “The Mexican Cosmic Race” (Stern, 2000). Black people are invisible since their arrival until 2020 when, for the first time, they achieved social recognition in Mexico. Despite its official invisibility, their integration into the *mestizo* culture preserved African cultural heritage, whose influences are in dances (*jarocho*, dance of the devils), music, and cuisine, mixed with Indigenous groups living with strong community and cultural cohesion. (Velázquez, 2015; Villafuerte, 2011).

The municipalities where Afro-Mexicans are mostly located in the Costa Chica region, behind the mountains of Guerrero and Oaxaca, where predominated the miscegenation with Indigenous groups; therefore, they do not possess the strong racial or cultural group identity with their African ancestors, like Indigenous people do. (INEGI, 2022)

Forced to adopt Western culture after the Conquest and the legacy of colonization, slavery, Catholic religion, racial miscegenation, Spanish education, and Modern eugenics, Indigenous and Afro-descendants have been racialized and discriminated in all the social and political spheres of the society. Contemporary globalization and migration add new threats to their cultural preservation (Velasco et al, 2014).

In Mexico, structural racism hidden behind jokes, nicknames like “Negro” or “Indio Ladino,” and segregates Indigenous people and Black people from childhood, at school, institutions, in social positions, and in public spaces. The multicultural approach continues the discrimination against miscegenation, hiding the presence of Afro-Mexicans in the population (Gomes, 2024; Navarrete, 2004).

Despite their less visible communities, there are recent advances in legal recognition of African slavery and African descendants in Mexican, who were legitimized as ethnic groups with specific rights since 2019 in the Constitution and in the National Program for Afro-descendants (2021), focused on health and education, as well as with including this ethnic category in the census (Valdivieso, 2016).

Despite colonization, slavery and racism, Indigenous and Afro-descendant families are pillars of Latin American cultural diversity. Numerous Indigenous live in extended families, whit other members residing together within the same household. And Indigenous and afro-descendant women play a key role in cultural transmission and the domestic economy and cultural preservation. Afro-descendant families maintain traditions (music, cooking, religion) and are frequently headed by women, with heavy economic burdens (Gandelman et al,

2011). Despite marginalization, both groups are resilient preserving their community and family values and practices.

3 VALUES, LAND, REPRODUCTION, AND HEALTH.

The collective ownership of the land implies the recognition of ancestral rights and reflects their historical massive participation in the Wars of Independence for the end of slavery and in the Revolution of 1910 for agrarian reform (León-Portilla, 2010). The connection that Indigenous peoples have with the land involves economic, social, identity, and religious elements. Afro-descendants in rural areas also conceive access to land not only as a guarantee of subsistence but also as continued cultural identification. For both, Indigenous people and Afro-descendants, land property, reproduction, family, and health are related to traces of ancestral values, beliefs and customs, as well as to Indigenous languages, all of this interwoven with Indigenous identity and sense of community. (Velasco et al, 2014; Gandelman, 2011; Bello and Rangel, 2002)).

Human reproduction is part of broader processes of social and cultural reproduction; of structures and networks of social relations, framing differences in the exercise of power, reproductive, sexual and family practices of individuals and their groups (Salles and Tuirán, 2001). The Indigenous youth have little autonomy and maintain strong family and social ties (Szasz and Lerner, 2010).

Beliefs and values about reproduction influence family size and contraceptive use, which differ among *mestizos* and Indigenous groups (Navarrete, 2004). Being indigenous reduces the probability of using some form of contraceptive by 45% compared to non-indigenous young women, and the most significant explaining variables are a) completing primary or secondary school, b) having the ideal number of children equal to or higher than four, and c) believing that women's role is to continue studying or working (No-family) (Ssandrín, 2010; Hicks, 1974).

Indigenous women have difficulty accessing basic sexual and reproductive health services, which has a significant impact on the average number of live births per woman: 3.3, compared to 2.2 for non-Indigenous women (UNFPA, 2021). Between 1999 and 2009, the fertility of non-Indigenous women decreased from 3.5 to 2.4 children per woman, while that of Indigenous women fell from 4.1 to 3.2 children per woman, with significant differences between the various Indigenous groups. (Sandrín, 2010; Sandrín, 2016).

Moreover, fertility among Indigenous adolescents aged 15 to 19 is higher than among non-Indigenous women, at 83 and 62 births per thousand adolescent women, respectively. Sixty-five percent of Indigenous adolescents are not in school. (Nolasco, 2021).

Barriers to accessing Western health services are distance, poverty, language and discrimination. In Mexico, only 15.4% of the Indigenous population has access to health services, in contrast to the national population, which has 16.3%. (Bello and Rangel, 2002). Moreover, due to male migration, 23.4% of indigenous households have a woman as a head. (Nolasco, 2021).

Reproduction, fertility, family formation and expansion are related to education level and socioeconomic inequalities, which are analyzed in the next section.

4 EDUCATION, WORK AND POVERTY

The most important challenges for Indigenous and Afro-Mexicans are socio-economic disadvantages — poverty and migration — that threaten indigenous autonomy and cultural preservation. (Gandelman, 2011; INPI, 2019). Even after decades of integration policies, Indigenous people continue discriminated against at school and in other social positions, mainly because of their language, clothing, and behavior.

Both groups live mostly in social exclusion – in poverty, geographical isolation, with lack of access to basic services (health, education), displacement due to territorial conflicts, elite control, capital-intensive agriculture, occupation and dispossession of their lands due to megaprojects like mines exploitation, agribusiness, infrastructure, as well as a secular decline in rural productivity and employment, aggravated by economic and land property reforms), financial sector liberalization and privatization, as well as migration. From the perspective of world systems, all these phenomena occur in interrelation with national and local contexts and have become increasingly frequent throughout the world in recent decades (Wallerstein, 2004; Gandelman et al, 2011; Sánchez, 2003).

Both groups have lower levels of education and income compared to their counterparts (Bello and Rangel, 2002). In Mexico, their income is unaffected by either increases or declines in national poverty rates and being indigenous increases by 30% the probability of being poor (Hall and Patrinos; 2006).

In Mexico, 31.1% of the Indigenous population has educational gaps, while the national percentage is 15.4%. 8.4 million Indigenous people live in poverty and 3.4 million live in extreme poverty. Indigenous women who migrated to cities have an average 6.2 years

of schooling, compared to the 9.1 years of schooling for women in the country. They work primarily in the informal sector, without social benefits, and survive from day to day, with an income that is also day by day in nature. (Nolasco, 2021).

Half of labor and income gaps between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous is related with the low educational attainment, and the other half by discrimination (Parker et al, 2005).

Parker et al. (2005) found that language barriers are related to the lower performance of Indigenous children, particularly among monolingual Indigenous, whereas bilingual children perform almost equivalent to their non-Indigenous counterparts in Mexico.

The low educational level of the mother, father's profession, and child labor reproduce among generations, since these are the main determinants affecting Indigenous children's enrollment at school and, subsequently, their labor discrimination and income disadvantages. (Román, 2013).

Qualitative studies indicate that that Indigenous children have high school expectations. Although Indigenous students often maintain high aspirations despite their parents' limited education, low parental cultural capital restricts the transfer of knowledge and skills necessary to sustain educational engagement and progress. Consequently, these students exhibit lower academic performance, higher rates of grade repetition and dropout than non-Indigenous peers, and frequently enter the labor market early, typically in precarious employment. (Espinoza et al, 2014).

In Mexico, in 2015, the educational attainment of the Indigenous was lower than for Afro-descendant people and speaking an Indigenous language or identifying as Indigenous has a negative effect of a larger magnitude compared to being Afro-descendant. Moreover, contrary to expectations, there is no evidence that Afro-descendants had a lower status in the labor market through occupational status, and even more remarkably in schooling. (Torre-Cantalapiedra and Sánchez-Soto, 2019)

Due to the migration of a considerable number of men to urban areas or overseas, women serve as heads of 23.4% of indigenous households. (Nolasco, 2021). Although migration to the US divides families, remittances help maintain international family connections and networks; however, migration and cultural loss also put pressure on collective land holdings (*Ejidos*) (Velasco et al, 2014).

5 METHODOLOGY

This article analyzes demographic and socioeconomic aspects that differ between these excluded populations — indigenous and Afro-descendants — in contrast to the rest of the population, comparing these three racialized population groups in Mexico according to age and family structure, civil status, number of children, and level of education.

The article develops an understanding as to how these population groups differ and the intersections between demographic and social characteristics in racialized groups.

The methodology includes the estimation of demographic indicators, graphs, and maps to describe and analyze the patterns, distribution, and differences between ethnically racialized groups, comparing proportions, population pyramids, and spatial distribution of Indigenous, Afro-descendants (AD) and other groups (OG) in Mexico. Indigenous populations are classified as those who speak an Indigenous language (IL) or self-defined as Indigenous (ISD).

Results from statistical correlations and logistic regression models demonstrate the factors likely to be associated with each ethnically racialized population, compared to their counterparts, as well as the main characteristics related to inequalities between groups.

The source of information is the National Survey of Demographic Dynamic --ENADID, field-applied in 2023 and whose results were released in 2025 (ENADID, 2025).

The dependent variable has two categories, representing one ethnically racialized group in contrast with the rest of the population. The independent variables studied are age, sex, marital status, level of education, area of residence (rural vs urban), household structure, health service affiliation, migration, and labor activity.

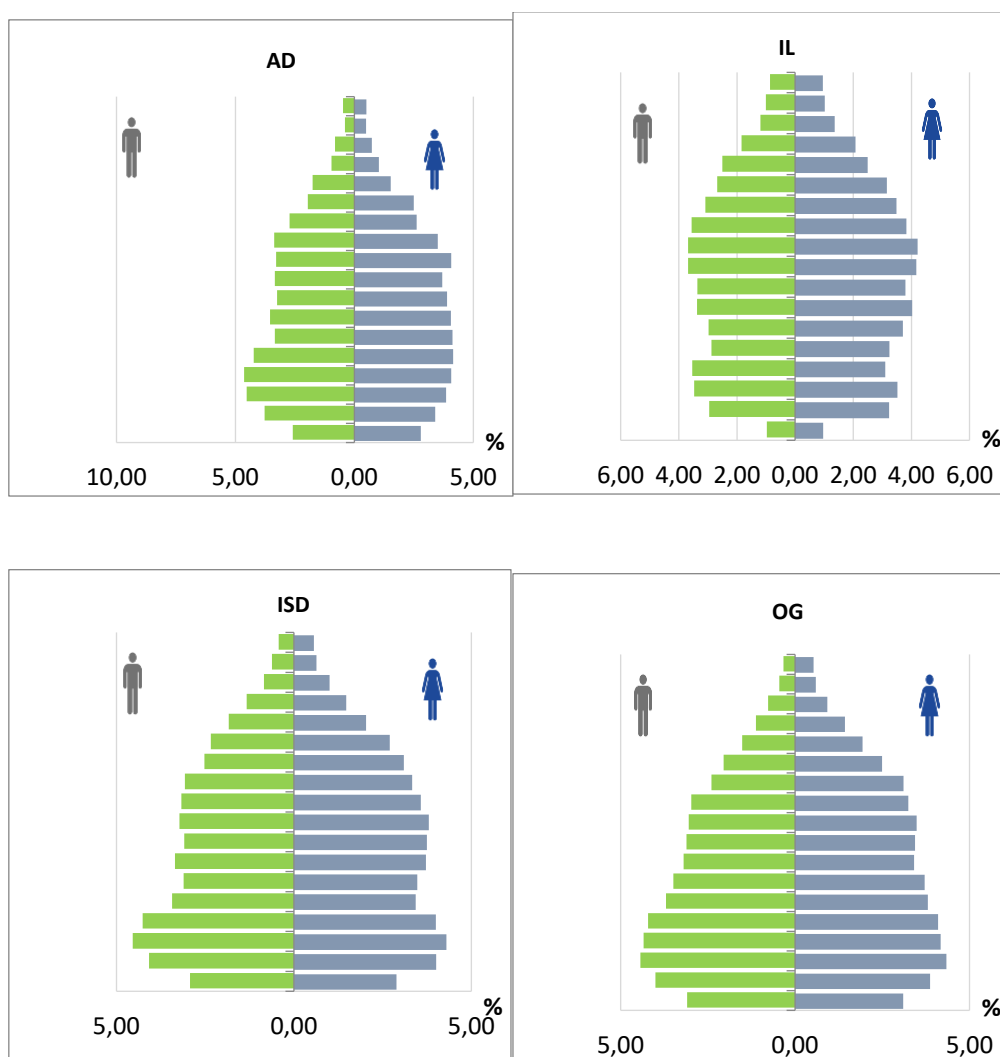
6 RESULTS

The Mexican population is mostly young and young-adult, with high proportions of them between 10 and 29 years old, and strong reductions in the number of children up to 9 years old, a result of the progressive reductions in the birth rates since the 1970s, which is observed in all racialized groups, although birth rates declined much later among Indigenous groups. The population is lower in this age group because Indigenous language data is collected for those over three groups. Indigenous (IL and ISD) have older population structures, compared to AD and OG. Their pyramids show a strong lack of male and female adults between the ages 25 and 44 and higher proportions of generations over 60 years old. This population structure is the result of long-term internal and international migration by Indigenous men and women from rural and Indigenous regions to Mexican urban centers and

the United States, leading to older Indigenous individuals remaining in both rural and urban areas. (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Population Pyramids of Ethnic-Racialized Groups in México, 2023



Source: Own estimations from the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID, 2023)

Among AD and OG populations, the age groups 10-14, 15-19, and 20-24 years old are the most populated, followed by slight decreases until 60-64, and then sharp decreases in the older age groups. The only exception is Afro-descendant men, who have a lack of representation between 30 and 50 years old, like Indigenous groups.

Afro-Mexicans (AD) show strong differences by sex: the female population structure is younger than the other groups, while the male age structure is older, with a lack of adult men, like Indigenous groups. As Afro-Mexicans are concentrated in specific rural areas of the

country (the mountains and coasts of the States of Guerrero and Oaxaca), it would be due to the migration of Afro-descendant adult men to find work, while Afro-Mexican women stay living in their area of origin.

Data from the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID, 2025) show similar trends.

Spatial distribution

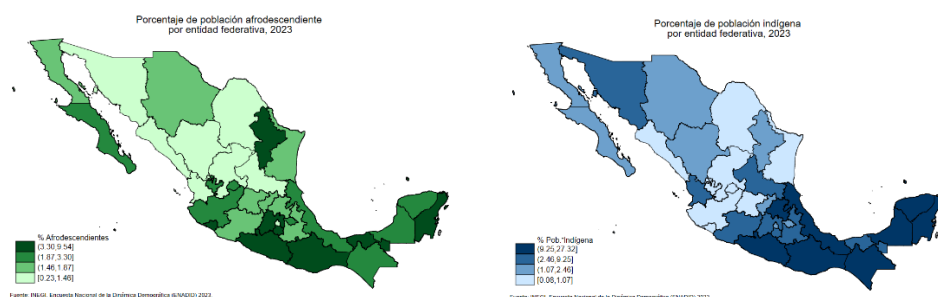
Afro-Mexicans reside mostly in Guerrero, Morelos, Colima, Oaxaca, México, Tabasco, Nuevo Leon, and Chiapas.

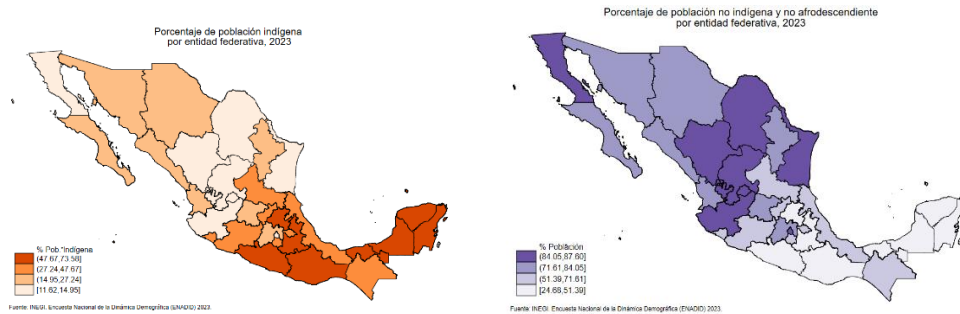
People who speak some Indigenous Language (IL) live mostly in the states of Oaxaca, Yucatán and Chiapas, followed by Quintana Roo, Guerrero, and Campeche, all of them on the Pacific or Atlantic coasts, as well as in Hidalgo, in the Central region, where they represent between 9% and 27% of the total population. These states have historically concentrated Indigenous populations.

Indigenous communities live mostly in the states of Oaxaca, Yucatán, Quintana Roo, Guerrero, Campeche, Hidalgo, Tabasco, and Puebla, mostly situated along the coast. Self-identified Indigenous people make up 48% to 74% of the population in these states, which is higher than those who speak an Indigenous language. All the other states have between 15% and 48% of the population who self-declare to be Indigenous, but self-declared mestizos and European-descendant people predominate. The elevated proportions of individuals self-identifying as Indigenous are associated with the recent addition of an option to indicate family and ethnic background in censuses and surveys. Educational policies oriented to development have erased their language from everyday use over the course of a century, forcing the use of Spanish, the denial of their indigenous identity and, instead, adopting the mestizo identity, in a process of inclusion by assimilation. (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Spatial Distribution of Ethnic-Racialized Groups in Mexico, 2023





Source: Own estimations from the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID, 2023)

Other groups (OG) who do not identify as Indigenous or Afro-descendants are in the North and Central regions of the country, with over 80% residing in Baja California, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, Durango, Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, Jalisco, and Mexico City. In these more developed states, a sizable portion of the population may identify with values commonly associated with contemporary Western societies. In these advanced states, most people align with modern Western values.

6.1 FAMILY FORMATION AND EXPANSION

The marital status is similar in the AD and OG populations — in both groups' half of the adults are married, followed by single people — around 40% of men and 30% of women. 5–9% live separated and 2–3% are divorced. The rates of widowhood differ by gender: for men, it is 2.8% and 2.3%, while for women, it is 8.7% and 8.1%. This variation is associated with differences in life expectancy between men and women.

In contrast, the Indigenous (IL) population has higher proportions of marriage (68.1% for men and 60.2% for women), lower proportions of separated (3.3%) and divorced (0.5%) of both sexes (7.3% and 0.6% respectively), as well as lower proportions of single men (23.3%) and women (19.6%), but higher proportions of widowed men (4.8%) and women (12.2%), due to their higher mortality and lower life expectancy. This result confirms the culture of family preservation and almost universal marriage among IL, compared to all other groups.

The following Indigenous group (ISD) has a similar marriage pattern to the IL, but slightly lower proportions of married men (57%) and women (53.1%), as well as higher proportions of separated (5.2% for women and 8.9 % for men), divorced (1.1% and 1.7% respectively), and single (33.5% and 26.4% respectively), and lower percentages of widowhood (3.2% and 9.9% respectively). Although this group preserves marriage and family values compared to other racialized groups, these values are lower than in the IL group, who

also preserve their Indigenous Language. Although assimilation policies and Western cultural influences led to language loss, family and marriage values stayed stable.

Table 1

Marital Status of Ethnic-Racialized groups in Mexico, 2023

<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Afro descendant (AD)</i>		<i>Indigenous Language (IL)</i>		<i>Indigenous Self-declared (ISD)</i>		<i>Other groups (OG)</i>	
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Wome</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Wome</i>
<i>Married</i>	53.1	49.9	68.1	60.2	57.0	53.1	50.8	49.0
<i>Separated</i>	4.9	9.5	3.3	7.3	5.2	8.9	5.0	7.7
<i>Divorced</i>	2.2	3.2	0.5	0.6	1.1	1.7	1.8	2.7
<i>Widow</i>	2.8	8.7	4.8	12.2	3.2	9.9	2.3	8.1
<i>Single</i>	37.0	28.6	23.3	19.6	33.5	26.4	40.2	32.5

Source: Own estimations from the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID, 2023)

The age at first union is low among the IL population (21.4), followed by the ISD group (21.5), the OG population (22.4 years old), and the latest to marry is the AD group (22.6) — more than one year later than Indigenous groups. The Afro-descendant population marries at a similar average age to the self-declared Indigenous.

Table 2

Average age at the first union in Mexico, 2023

<i>Total population</i>	22.1
<i>Afro descendant population</i>	22.6
<i>Indigenous population, language</i>	21.4
<i>Indigenous population, self-declared</i>	21.5
<i>NINA, No Indigenous & no Afro descendant</i>	22.4
<i>Population with an inability</i>	22.6

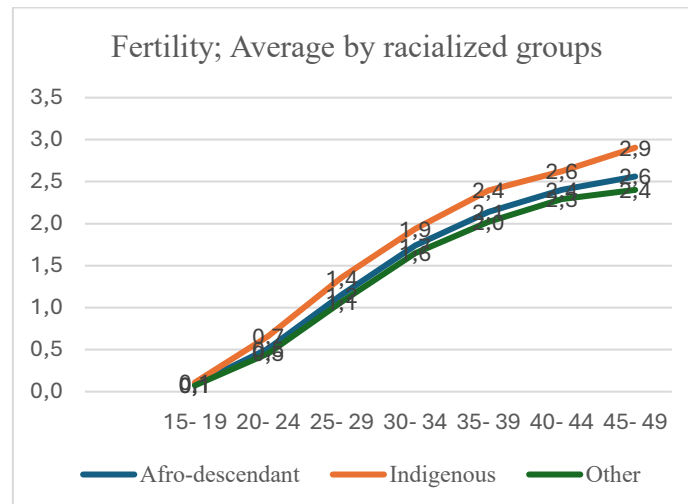
Source: Own estimations from the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID, 2023)

In brief, Indigenous groups marry in higher proportions and earlier, particularly the IL population, while Afro-descendant people marry in lower proportions and much later than Indigenous and compared to other population groups.

Indigenous women tend to marry younger and at higher rates, resulting in longer exposure to sexual activity and pregnancy risk. As a result, they also have a higher number of children, compared to Afro-descendants and other population groups. (Figure 3)

Figure 3

Average Fertility by racialized groups, México, 2023



Source: Own estimations from the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID, 2023)

6.2 HOUSEHOLD SIZE, STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

Indigenous households are larger (33.1% of them have up to five members) than Afro-descendant households (25.1% have up to five members). The smaller households are among the OG population, related to their lower marriage rates and higher separation, divorce and single rates, as well as their higher age at marriage and lower fertility. In contrast,

Indigenous populations have consistent indicators related to the persistence of strong family values — higher proportions of marriage, lower proportions of separation and divorce, a lower age of marriage and a higher fertility.

Indigenous households are, on average, larger (3.9 members) than Afro-descendant (AD) households (3.5 members) and Other Groups (OG) households (3.3 members). Indigenous and Afro-descendant households each have, on average, 2.2 members who either speak an Indigenous language or self-identify as Afro-descendant.

Table 4

Household size by ethnic-racial condition in Mexico, 2023

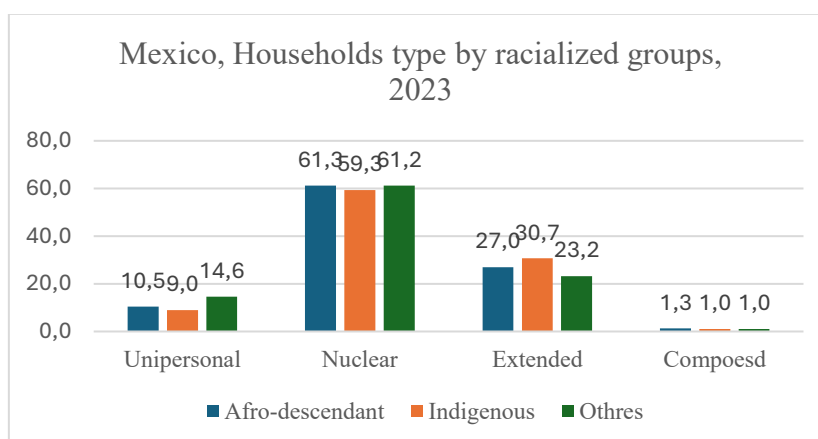
Size	Afro descendant (AD) Households		Indigenous Households		Other Groups (OG) Households	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	1,442,497	100.0	3,291,684	100.0	34,124,263	100.0
1	150,986	10.5	294,946	9.0	4,983,030	14.6
2	295,054	20.5	631,474	19.2	7,531,023	22.1
3	314,213	21.8	625,146	19.0	7,128,349	20.9
4	319,488	22.1	650,495	19.8	7,094,829	20.8
5 +	362,756	25.1	1,089,623	33.1	7,387,032	21.6

Source: Own estimations from the National Survey of Demographic Dynamics (ENADID) 2023.

The predominant proportion of nuclear households is aligned with the preference for marry and having children for the three groups, with slightly proportions for Afro-descendants and Indigenous. The second more frequent type of household is the extended with another member of the family, confirming the preference for collective values in both groups, compared to the rest of the population. Moreover, Afro-descendant people have higher proportion of unipersonal household and lower proportion of extended hosehold, compared to Indigenous and the other group, a less shared network of family relationships, suggesting a kind of isolation as individuals.

Figure 4

Household structure by racialized groups, Mexico, 2023.



Source: Own estimations from the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID, 2023)

As a result, the proportion of members declaring an ethnic-racial condition within their households or among all the members of their households is small — in all households, they represent less than 10 % of the total number of members in the family composition. Indigenous and Afro-descendant individuals comprise less than 5% of family members.

Table 5

Proportion of Afro descendant people in Afro-descendant households, Mexico, 2023

<i>Percent in the total number of members</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Total</i>	1,442,497	100.0
<i>Less than 5%</i>	1,292,060	89.6
<i>5 - 9%</i>	147,011	10.2
<i>10 - 16%</i>	3,426	0.2
Proportion of Indigenous people in Indigenous households, 2023		
<i>Percent in relation to the total number of members</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Total</i>	3,291,684	100.0
<i>Less than 5%</i>	2,941,838	89.4
<i>5 - 9%</i>	339,414	10.3

10 - 14%

10,432

0.3

Source: Own estimations from the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID, 2023)

6.3 LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Indigenous people have the lowest level of education, 22.8 % of them do not complete the basic school education, 19.1 % complete the basic school education, 18.9 % the secondary school education, but 17.9 % have no education; only 11.1 % of them finish the higher secondary level education. In contrast, Other Groups (OG) achieved 33.4 % with higher secondary education and 36.2 % at university; and Afro-descendant people are in an intermediate position, with 19.5 % with complete secondary education, 21.1 % in higher secondary education and 19.7 % at university.

The proportion of people with no education is also higher among the Other Groups (OG), but this could also be related to their higher life expectancy, and the survival of the elderly generation who didn't have access to the universalization of the educational system, that happened 70 years ago.

Table 6

Level of education by Ethnic-Racialized groups in Mexico, 2023

<i>Level of education</i>	<i>Afro descendant</i>	<i>Indigenous language</i>	<i>Indigenous self-declared</i>	<i>Other Group</i>
<i>No education</i>	8.7	17.9	11.0	16.4
<i>Incomplete primary</i>	13.7	22.8	18.9	3.7
<i>Complete primary</i>	11.7	19.1	14.9	2.7
<i>Incomplete secondary</i>	5.6	4.4	5.8	2.3
<i>Incomplete secondary</i>	19.5	18.9	21.3	5.3
<i>Higher secondary</i>	21.1	11.1	16.8	33.4
<i>Higher</i>	19.7	5.74	11.0	36.2

Source: Own estimations from the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID, 2023)

6.4 MULTIVARIATE DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The logistic models contrast Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations to their counterparts, controlling family and other social variables. Both vulnerable groups — Indigenous and Afro-descendants— have a higher and significant probability to have a lower education level and to live in rural areas, compared to their counterparts. Additionally,



Indigenous people are likely to be women, living in extended households, while Afro-descendants are likely to be older and not affiliated to health services.

Table 7

Logistic Model. Socio demographic factors related to Indigenous and Afro-descendant People in Mexico, 2023

	Odds Ratio Indigenous Language		Odds Ratio Afro Descendant	
Gender (men)	0.1772924	**	0.0343524	
Age (<17)				
18- 29	-0.2084712		0.0700014	
30- 59	-0.0809361		0.1801266	*
60 +	0.0218807		0.3570382	**
Marital Status (Single)				
Married	0.1791051		0.0050568	
Separated, Divorced	0.1829592		-0.005845	
Widow	0.0717031		0.0310778	
Level of Education (No education)				
Basic school	0.0288725		-0.1401354	*
Secondary	0.3785551	**	-0.0943434	
Middle superior	0.446241	**	-0.3299054	***
Superior	0.828407	***	-0.4400946	***
Household structure (unipersonal)				
Nuclear	0.1963908		0.0977776	
Extended	0.3283216	*	0.1803625	
Area of residence (urban)	-0.597918	***	0.4850105	***
Migrants living in the household (no)	-0.2611708		0.1127791	
Affiliation to health service (no)	0.1327841		-0.1773506	**
Labor activity (not working)	-0.0592059		-0.0173633	
_cons	-1.187799	***	2.766557	***

Note: *** p<0.0001; ** p <0.05; * p<0.10

Source: Own elaboration based on National Survey of Demographic Dynamics (ENADID) 2023.

Despite the differences observed in descriptive data, marital status and migration were not sufficiently significant to explain the differences between each vulnerable group separately in contrast with others.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Both indigenous and Afro-descendant households have higher marriage and birth rates and start early unions and fertility than the rest of the mestizo and European-descendant

population, especially in rural areas, as well as early marriage and traditional gender roles, along with high but declining fertility rates and lower access to healthcare. These results confirm results from previous authors (Pino et al, 2020; Costa et al, 2022).

In certain Indigenous communities, teenage pregnancy aligns with cultural norms supporting fertility and marriage. But there are also cases related to violence against Indigenous and Afro-descendant adolescents. Extended families often reside together in villages, with multiple family units participating in local governance based on established customs and traditions. Women are often the guardians of languages and traditions, particularly in cooking, textiles, and handcrafts.

Indigenous people preserve their family culture with universal marriage and children, as well as the culture of sharing the household with other relatives. While Afro-Mexicans are likely to be older than other groups and share the households with other relatives. This results in strong challenges to health, because they are the oldest, and exposed to having a higher prevalence of chronic and degenerative illness but, at the same time, they suffer a strong lack of access to education and health services, as well as lower participation in the labor market and lower income levels, compared to the rest of the population.

Both groups present specific dynamics, influenced by socio-economic discrimination and cultural resilience. (Lezama, 2023; Costa et al, 2022).

As a conclusion, we could say that the predominant characteristics of Mexican Indigenous people are the socioeconomic exclusion and discrimination, as well as their resilience to preserve collective and family values, customs and practices, through the predominance of marriage and larger number of children, as well as the value of sharing the household with other relatives, facing collectively economic adversities and discrimination. While African-Mexicans are likely to be older than other groups, this results in strong challenges to health, because they are the oldest, and exposed to having a higher prevalence of chronic and degenerative illness but, at the same time, they suffer a strong lack of access to health services, more than other groups (Costa et al, 2022).

Ethnic and racial disparities within the population are evident in relation to existing structural and familial inequities. The ageing process is less accelerated among indigenous and Afro-descendants, related to their lower level of education and other socio-economic vulnerabilities, but also to their higher fertility and family structure and composition, leading to the need for support for the racialized women and elderly in the next decades, and multi-generational families.

REFERENCES

- Ansley, F. L. (1997). White Supremacy (And What We Should Do about It). In R. Delgado & J. Stefancic (Eds.), **Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror** (pp. 592–655). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Bello, A., and Rangel, M. (2002). La equidad y la exclusión de los pueblos indígenas y afrodescendientes en América Latina y el Caribe. *Revista de la CEPAL*. 76. 10.18356/61fc0d54-es.
- CONAZA. Comisión Nacional de Zonas Áridas (2023). Día internacional de los Pueblos Indígenas. Gobierno de México. <https://www.gob.mx/conaza/articulos/dia-internacional-de-los-pueblos-indigenas-341934#:~:text=En%20M%C3%A9xico%20habitan%2068%20pueblos,que%20juntas%20re%C3%BAnen%20364%20variantes>.
- Costa JC, Mujicca OJ, Gatica-Dominguez G, Pino S, Carvajal L., Sanhueza A, Caffé S, Victora CG, Barrosa AJD (2022). Inequalities in the health, nutrition, and wellbeing of Afrodescendant women and children: A cross-sectional analysis of ten Latin American and Caribbean countries. *The Lancet Regional Health- Americas* 2022;15: 100345 Published online 19 August 2022 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lana.2022.10034>
- Darién JD. (1995). *Slavery and Beyond: The African Impact on Latin America and the Caribbean*. (1995). SR Books. Oxford. Introduction y Cap.1 p.p. 1-11.
- ENADID (2025). Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica. INEGI. <https://www.inegi.org.mx/rnm/index.php/catalog/981> Accessed on June 20th, 2025.
- Espinoza OD, Castillo DG, Gonzalez FLE, Loyola JC. (2014) Factores familiares asociados a la deserción escolar en los niños y niñas mapuche: un estudio de caso. *Family Factors Related to School Dropout in Mapuche Children: A Case Study*. *Estudios pedagógicos*. vol.40 no.1. Valdivia. versión On-line ISSN 0718-0705 <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-07052014000100006>
- Gandelman, N., Ñopo, H., and Ripani, L. (2011). Traditional Excluding Forces: A Review of the Quantitative Literature on the Economic Situation of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants, and People Living with Disability. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 53(4), 147–179. doi:10.1111/j.1548-2456.2011.00137.x
- Gomes, C (2024). Racism Against Indigenous People and Afro-Descendants in Sweden, Brazil, and Mexico. *Arace*. Brazil. <https://doi.org/10.56238/arev6n4-270> 17/12/2024.
- Hall, G and Patrinos, HA. (2006). *Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Human Development in Latin America*. Palgrave McMillan.

- Hicks, W. Whitney (1974), "Economic development and fertility change in Mexico, 1950-1970", in *Demography*, Maryland: Population Association of America, agosto, vol. 11, núm. 3. Holian, John (1980), "Patterns of fertility determinants in Mexico, 1970", PhD thesis, Ohio, Bowling Green State University.
- INALI (2009). Catálogo de las Lenguas Indígenas Nacionales. Variantes Lingüísticas de México con sus autodenominaciones y referencias geoestadísticas. México, 2009. Versión en línea: http://site.inali.gob.mx/pdf/catalogo_lenguas_indigenas.pdf
- INEGI. 2022. Comunicado de Prensa N. 430/22 8 de agosto de 2022, Pag. 1/7 Estadísticas a propósito del día internacional de los pueblos indígenas.
- https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/aproposito/2022/EAP_PueblosInd22.pd
- INEGI 2024. Censo de Población y Vivienda (2020). Perfil sociodemográfico de la población afrodescendiente en México. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. -- México:
- INPI (2019). Data on family structure and support programs. National Institute of Indigenous Peoples Mexico. (. National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI, Mexico): Accessed on June 08th, 2025.
- León-Portilla, M. (2010). Los pueblos originarios en la guerra de Independência y en la revolución de 1910. In A. León-Portilla & A. Mayer (Eds.), *Los indígenas en la independencia y en la Revolución mexicana*. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia - INAH, UNAM-IIH.
- Lezama, P. (2023) Studies on Demographics and Social Indicators. Afro descendants in Latin America and their Sociodemographic Realities. Eds. Bernd Reiter, John Antón Sánchez. Routledge Handbook of Afro-Latin American Studies
- Navarrete, Federico (2004), Las relaciones interétnicas en México. México D.F.: UNAM.
- Nolasco Marisol M. (2021) ¿Quiénes son las mujeres indígenas hoy día? Who are Indigenous Women Today? Antropología. Revista Interdisciplinaria del INAH. Diversa. No. 10. Pag. 108-116. Mexico.
- Ordorica M, Rodríguez C, Velázquez B. and Maldonado B (2009). El índice de reemplazo etnolingüístico entre la población indígena de México", en *Desacatos*, México D.F.: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, núm. 29, enero abril.
- Parker SW, Rubalcava L, and Teruel G. (2005). Schooling Inequality and Language Barriers. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. Volume 54, Number 1
- Pino, S. d., Gómez-Salgado, J., Domínguez-Gómez, J. A., and. Ruiz-Frutos, C. (2020). People of African Descent of the Americas, Racial Discrimination, and Quality of the Health Services. *Sustainability*, 12(17), 6930. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12176930>
- Román C., M., (2013). Factores asociados al abandono y la deserción escolar en América Latina: Una mirada en conjunto. REICE. Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia

y Cambio en Educación, 11(2),33-59. [Accessed on Aug 5th, 2025]. ISSN. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=55127024002>

Salles, Vania y Tuirán, Rodolfo (2001), “El discurso de la salud reproductiva: ¿un nuevo dogma?”, en Stern, Claudio y Figueroa, Juan Guillermo (coord.), Sexualidad y salud reproductiva: avances y retos para la investigación. México D. F.: El Colegio de México. Anticoncepción en mujeres indígenas jóvenes de Oaxaca, México

Sánchez, Ángeles (2003), Mujeres, Maternidad y Cambio. Prácticas reproductivas y experiencias maternas en la ciudad de México. México D.F.: UNAM/UAM. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324831025_Mujeres_maternidad_y_cambio_Practicas_reproductivas_y_experiencias_maternas_en_la_ciudad_de_Mexico

Sandrín Germán V. (2016) La identidad étnica desde los estudios longitudinales en La población Afro-descendiente e indígena en América Latina. Serie e-Investigaciones N. 4 Asociación Latinoamericana de Población – ALAP <https://www.alapop.org> Cap 6. https://www.alapop.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/alap_2015_serie_e_investigaciones_21082017-117-132_Capt-6.pdf [alap_2015_serie_e_investigaciones_21082017-117-132_Capt-6.pdf](https://www.alapop.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/alap_2015_serie_e_investigaciones_21082017-117-132_Capt-6.pdf)

Sandrín, Germán V (2010), Fecundidad indígena. Pachuca: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo.

Stern, A. (2000). Mestizofilia, biotipología y eugenesia en el México posrevolucionario: hacia una historia de la ciencia y el Estado, 1920-1960. *Relaciones: Estudios de historia y sociedad*, 21(81), 59-90. <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/137/13708104.pdf>.

Szasz, Ivonne y Lerner, Susana (2010), “Salud reproductiva y desigualdades en la población”, en Ordorica, Manuel y García, Brígida (coord.), Los grandes problemas de México. México, D.F.: El Colegio de México.

Torre-Cantalapiedra, E, and Sánchez-Soto, Gabriela. (2019). Afro-descendants and social stratification in Mexico. New evidence from the 2015 Intercensal Survey. *Papeles de población*, 25(100), 273-302. Epub 19 de junio de 2020. <https://doi.org/10.22185/24487147.2019.100.20> UNFPA (2010). Intercultural Sexual and Reproductive Health among Indigenous Peoples in Latin America. Panama. <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/intercultural-sexual-and-reproductive-health-among-indigenous-peoples-latin-america>

UNFPA (2021): "Sexual and reproductive health in Indigenous women".

<https://minorityrights.org/resources/indigenous-womens-maternal-health-and-maternal-mortality/#:~:text=The%20report%2C%20published%20in%202021%2C%20documents%20both%20a,take%20up%20of%20sexual%20and%20reproductive%20health%20services.>

Valdivieso NV (2016) Anticoncepción en mujeres indígenas jóvenes de Oaxaca, México. Reflexiones desde los derechos humanos Cap11. La heterogeneidad de los pueblos originarios y su reconocimiento como sujetos de derecho en La población afro descendiente e indígena en América Latina. Serie e-Investigaciones N. 4 Asociación Latinoamericana de Población – ALAP <https://www.alapop.org>

- Velasco OL, Pombo, DP, and Olavarria M (2014). Introduction: Indigenous Migration in Mexico and Central America: Interethnic Relations and Identity Transformations. Ed. Kearney M. Latin American Perspectives. SAGE publications. Vol. 41, No. 3, Indigenous Migration in Mexico and Central America: In the Footsteps of Michael Kearney (May 2014), pp. 5-25
- Velázquez, M. Elisa. (2015). Racismo hacia afrodescendientes en México: reflexiones históricas y problemas contemporáneos. In Gomes C. Discriminação e Racismo nas Américas. CRV. Curitiba. 2015.
- Villafuerte, EA (2011). Estudio sobre los derechos de los pueblos negros de México. Programa Universitario México Nación Multicultural, México: UNAM, Colección informes y estudios.
- Wallerstein (2004) - Análisis de sistemas-mundo: una introducción. México: Siglo XXI.
- World Bank, 2015. Indigenous Latin America in the Twenty-First Century. The First Decade. <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/topic/indigenouspeoples>