

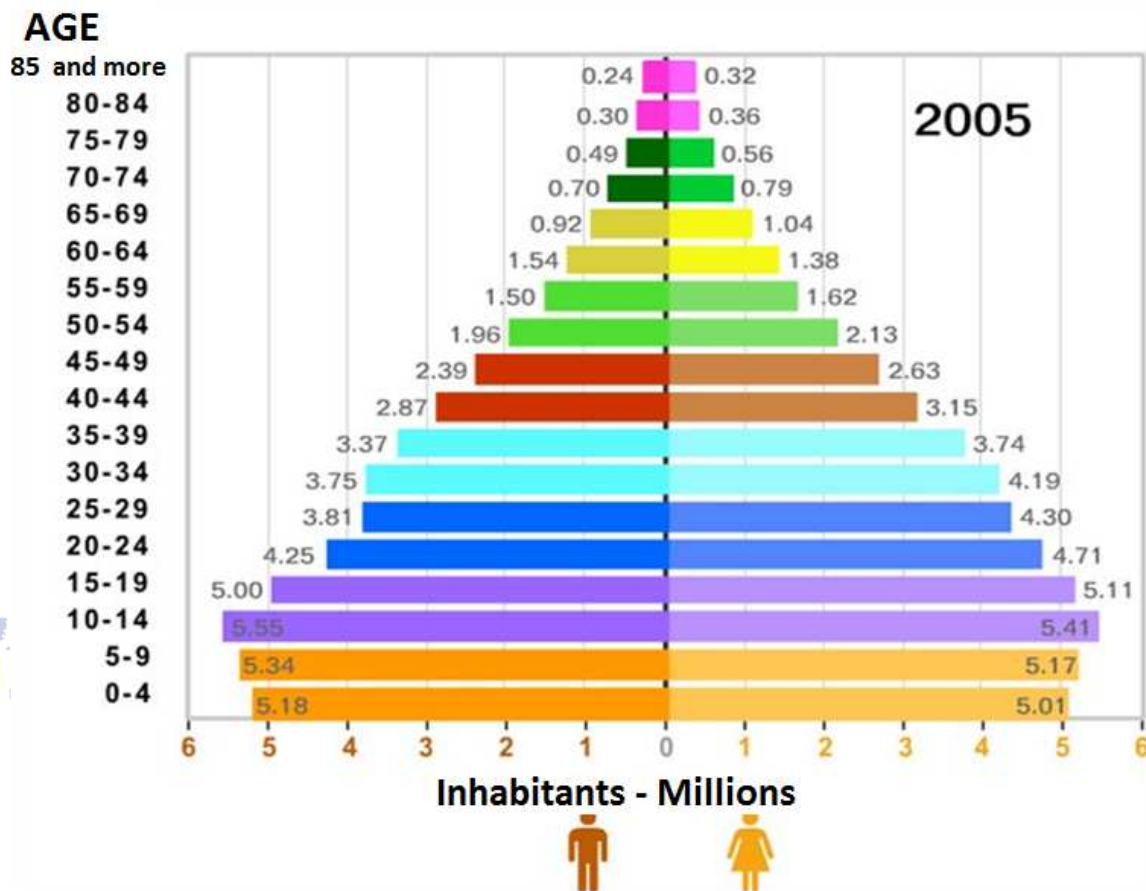


**Youth and Young Adults in Mexico:
 beyond the debate over numbers**



The population of Mexico is aging. The famous broad based pyramid of the Mexican population, with its very young median age, is slowly but surely inverting into a European style structure with a rising bulge. The graphic below shows the base (those up to 9 years old) as more narrow than the youth population immediately above. The value of this kind of graphic is in suggesting the apparent fragility of having of society with fewer and fewer children.

The great demographic bubble in Mexico is now concentrated in the 10 to 34 year olds. Actually, the biggest part of the bubble is with the 10 to 24 year olds. Supposedly this group was to be a kind of “democratic bonus” for Mexico, a well educated and trained group of workers who would reach new levels of productivity, earning and tax paying that would support their elders and lift the level of the whole society. What has happened is that a big percentage of these youth and young adults are not studying, not working (the “nini’s” *ni estudiando ni trabajando* of current discussion).





Young population in Mexico, 2005 - INEGI count / 2010 Projection Population of 12 to 29 years.

According to the new Law of Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud, released on the “Diario Oficial de la Federación”, on January 8th, 1999, all people of 12 to 29 years old is considered as “young”, approximately 30% of all Mexican inhabitants.

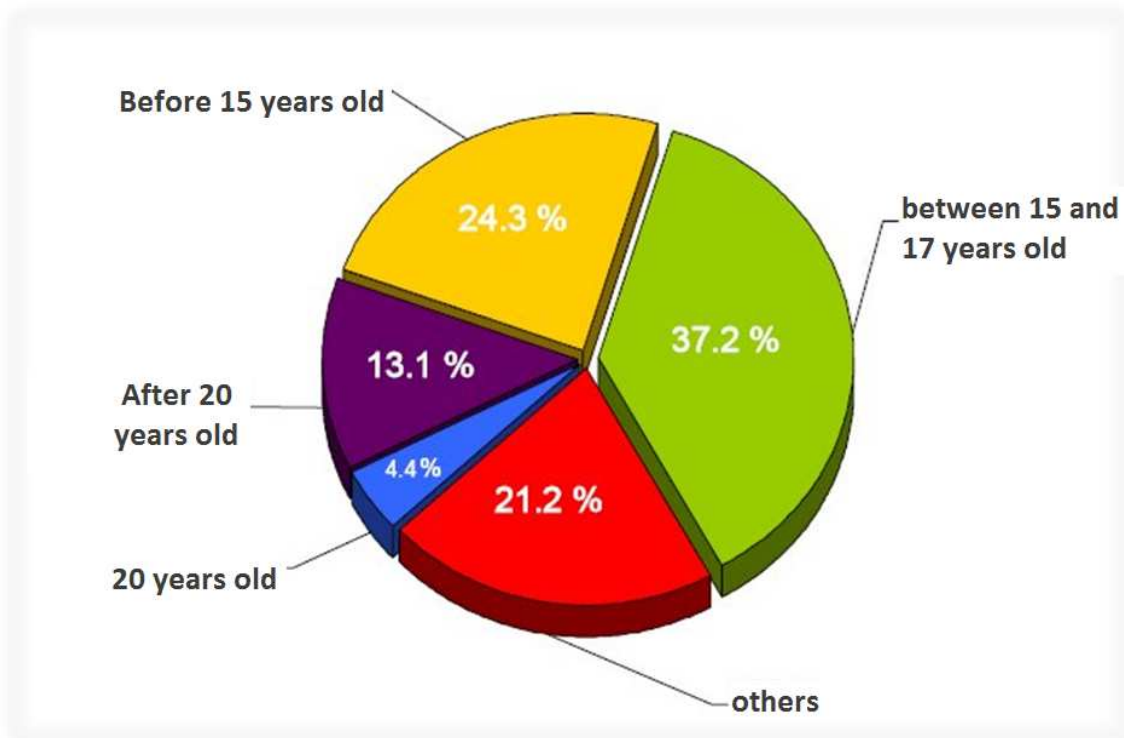
Ages	Total	Women	Men
	33,774,976	17,385,802	16,389,174
12 years	2,248,077	1,105,985	1,142,092
13 years	2,200,517	1,089,182	1,111,335
14 years	2,149,374	1,068,697	1,080,677
15 years	2,187,171	1,088,642	1,098,529
16 years	2,001,801	1,004,731	997,070
17 years	2,048,540	1,029,051	1,019,489
18 years	2,081,573	1,054,563	1,027,010
19 years	1,789,936	936,128	853,808
20 years	1,954,604	1,023,955	930,649
21 years	1,647,628	866,660	780,968
22 years	1,863,598	975,252	888,346
23 years	1,803,618	950,817	852,801
24 years	1,695,181	894,505	800,676
25 years	1,792,645	951,220	841,425
26 years	1,550,774	829,609	721,165
27 years	1,587,330	837,967	749,363
28 years	1,702,701	898,136	804,565
29 years	1,469,908	780,702	689,206

The 12,834,850 youth in the 12 to 17 range (38% of the total) are the first to leave school and enter the job market, usually in the informal sector. They are the adolescents who don't get to enjoy adolescence.

Many of the 11,140,957 youth in the range of 18 to 23 years (33% of the total) leave school with a limited education and are now part of the current group known as “nini's.” Some journalists have called them the last youth; another term placing the responsibility for job shortages and educational shortfalls on the society would be the betrayed youth.

The 9,793,572 youth in the range of 24 to 29 (29% of the total) leave school with a more complete education but are confronting a job market too limited for what they can do. Their preparation exceeds their current possibilities.

Study by the Institute of Youth in Mexico on school desertion



Source: Dirección de Investigación y Estudios sobre Juventud, del Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud (DIEJ - IMJ)

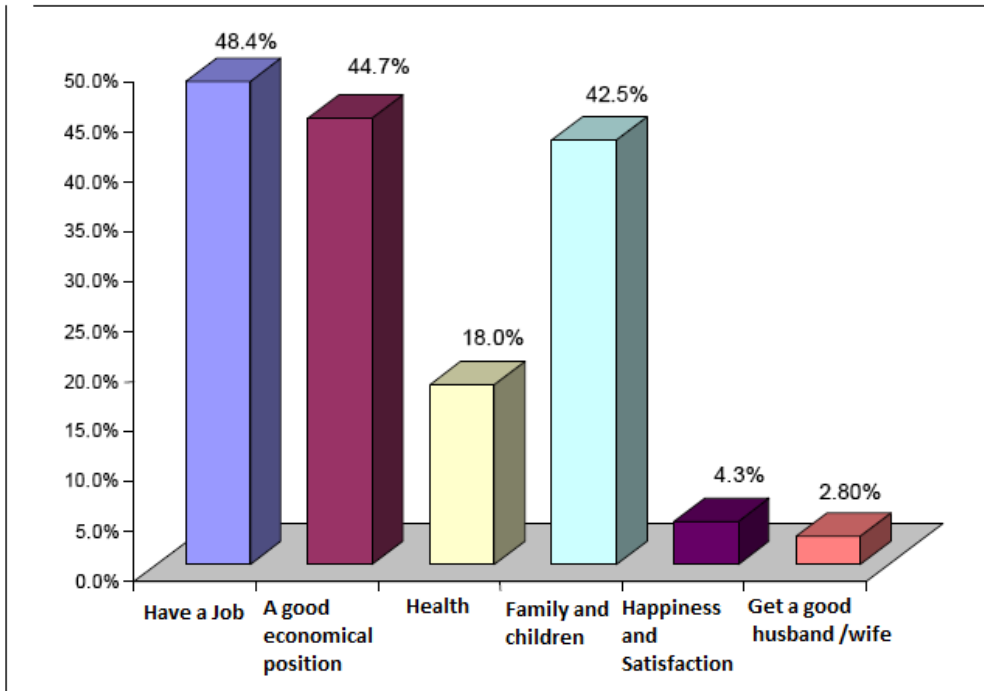
Of all the process of dropping out of school, we anticipate that some 61% of the dropouts impact the 12 to 17 year old group. For the balance of this discussion, we will look at the data of the Mexican Youth Institute, an official federal institution, with relative autonomy. The data includes special focus studies such as noted in the graphic above, and the 2005 National Youth Survey, around which has taken place the debate over the size of the nini group.

The causes of school desertion are varied and complex. The biggest percentages include 42% who leave because they have to work, along with 29% because they just don't wish to keep studying, 12% because their parents don't want them to continue. Without exploring the qualitative depths of the responses, we can summarize that 42% leave for economic reasons at some stage of the education process, and another 41% leave because it doesn't make sense for them or their parents.

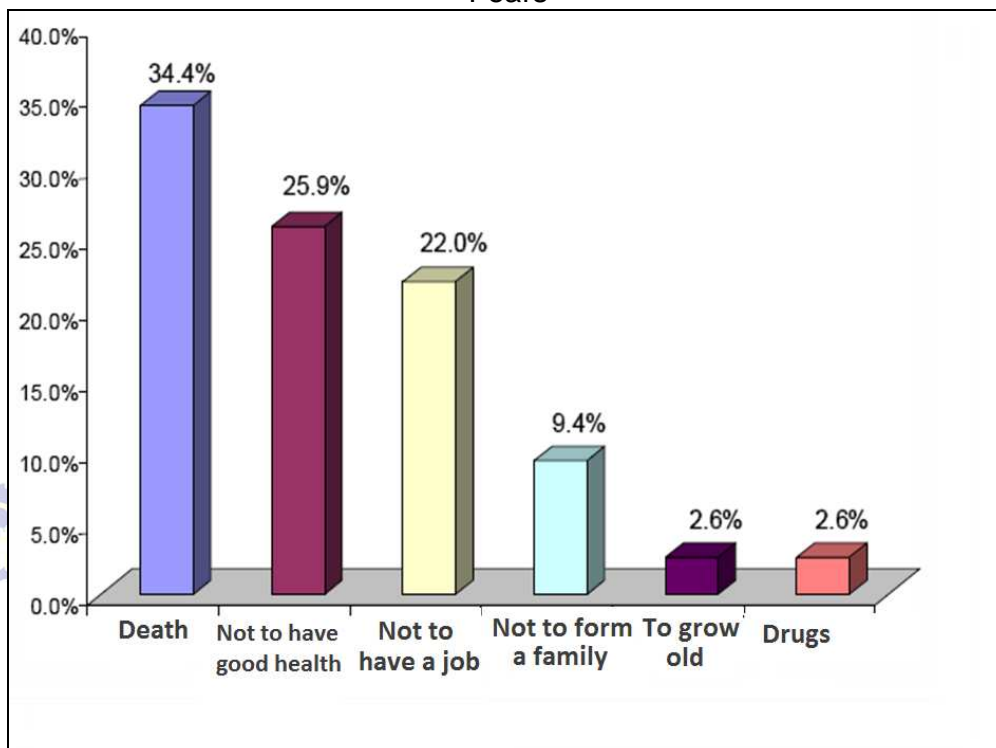
In spite of this, there is confidence among the Young people that things will get better in the future, some 50.9% feel this way. Only 14.5% feels a lack of confidence or uncertainty. The three things (not mutually exclusive) that the young hope most for in the future are to have work, 48.4%, a good economic situation, 44.7%, and to have a family including children, 42.5%.



Expectations



Fears





The range of ages, and the estimation of nini's according to a variety of sources

Before the “reduction” of the nini statistic from 7.5m to 4.9m by the same Mexican Institute of Youth and further down to 285,000 on the part of the Secretariats of Government and Education, there was an emerging consensus among researchers in the public and private sectors. The “reduction” was, in effect, from 22% of the youth population to 0.8%.

Year	Youth who are neither studying nor working	Age-rank	Mentioned by
2010	8,000,000	12 to 29 years	COPARMEX, (major alliance of Chambers of Commerce)
2010	7,500,000	Less than 35 years	Eduardo Sojo Director INEGI
2010	7,500,000	15 to 29 years	Ignacio Téllez González - PAN Deputy INEGI
2010	7,400,000	12 to 29 years	José Narro Robles Rector, UNAM
2010	4,900,000	12 to 29 years	Priscila Vera Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud

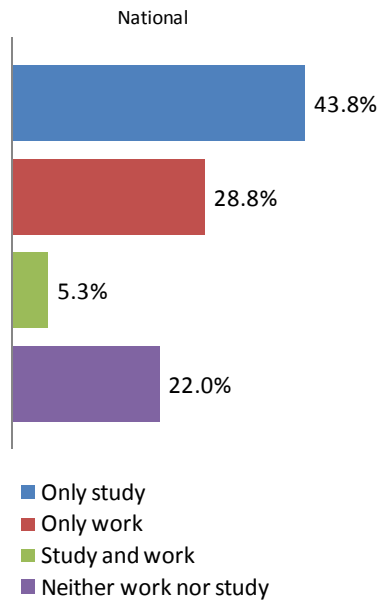
The key document in all of this, the initial point of reference, is the 2005 Youth Survey. Let's put to one side for the moment the fact that only five years later we are debating the result, and discussing the significance of the finding. Further, let's put one side the fact that the 2005 survey took place before the cooling of the Mexican economy in 2005-7, its near freezing in 2008, and the fall in GDP in 2009. In any event, the reference of 2005 is solid, with its 3,480 interviews in a good sample-frame, even if not “up to date.” In fact, the study completed in a time of a supposedly improving situation is even more challenging to review and discuss. The program of the UNAM team of researchers, the simple design, the questionnaire and the basic results with cross tabulations for gender and age are available from the Mexican Institute of Youth and on the web side of the MUND Group (www.mundgroup.com).

Literally the first question of the Survey is (P1.1) “¿at this time are you studying or working?” Option 4 is “I don't work, don't study,” with 22% of the respondents, and based on this a projection of 7.4+m.

In order to “reduce” the number of young people in this category, it was necessary to cut out all the young women who were working or might have been working in the home, all the disabled, and those who could possibly be said to be “looking for work” in one form or another. In this, we can see the intensity of the polemic that ensued. Thus, the federal executive attempted to redefine the category, the problem itself, and reduce it to a level of insignificance.



Currently, do you study or work?



Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud - 2005

According to the study, there is 28.8% who are no studying, but who are working, along with 22% who are not working or studying.

Following this data we find a little over half of the surveyed group, 50.8%, or about 17,147,687 youth who might be studying but who are not.

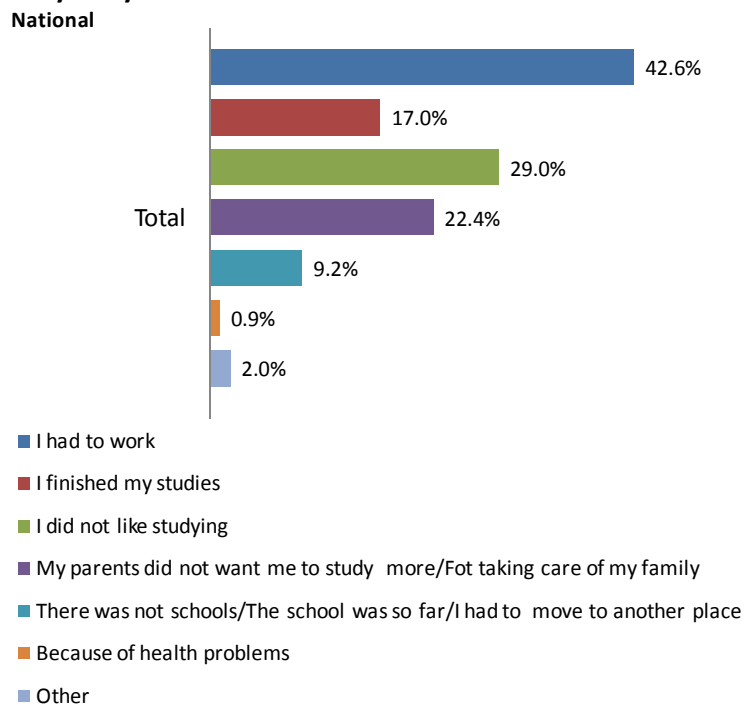
This is a group that cries out to be studied in depth, with both qualitative methods and quantitative, especially bearing in mind that this 50.8% appears to be concentrated in the poorest and most marginalized sectors of the society.

Some 43% said they had to go to work, another 29% said they didn't like to study, and 22.4% said that their parents didn't want them to work, or they had to take care of their family. And, 9.2% said there was no school available, or they had moved to another place and didn't continue.

For these reasons, individually or in combination, up to 83% are saying they could not or didn't want to study.

In the midst of all this young people, women and men, are passing through the profound physical, psychological and social changes of adolescence. If all that is not enough, they are also being affected in greater or lesser ways by the various pressures to leave school, however inadequate the education may be.

Why did you leave school?

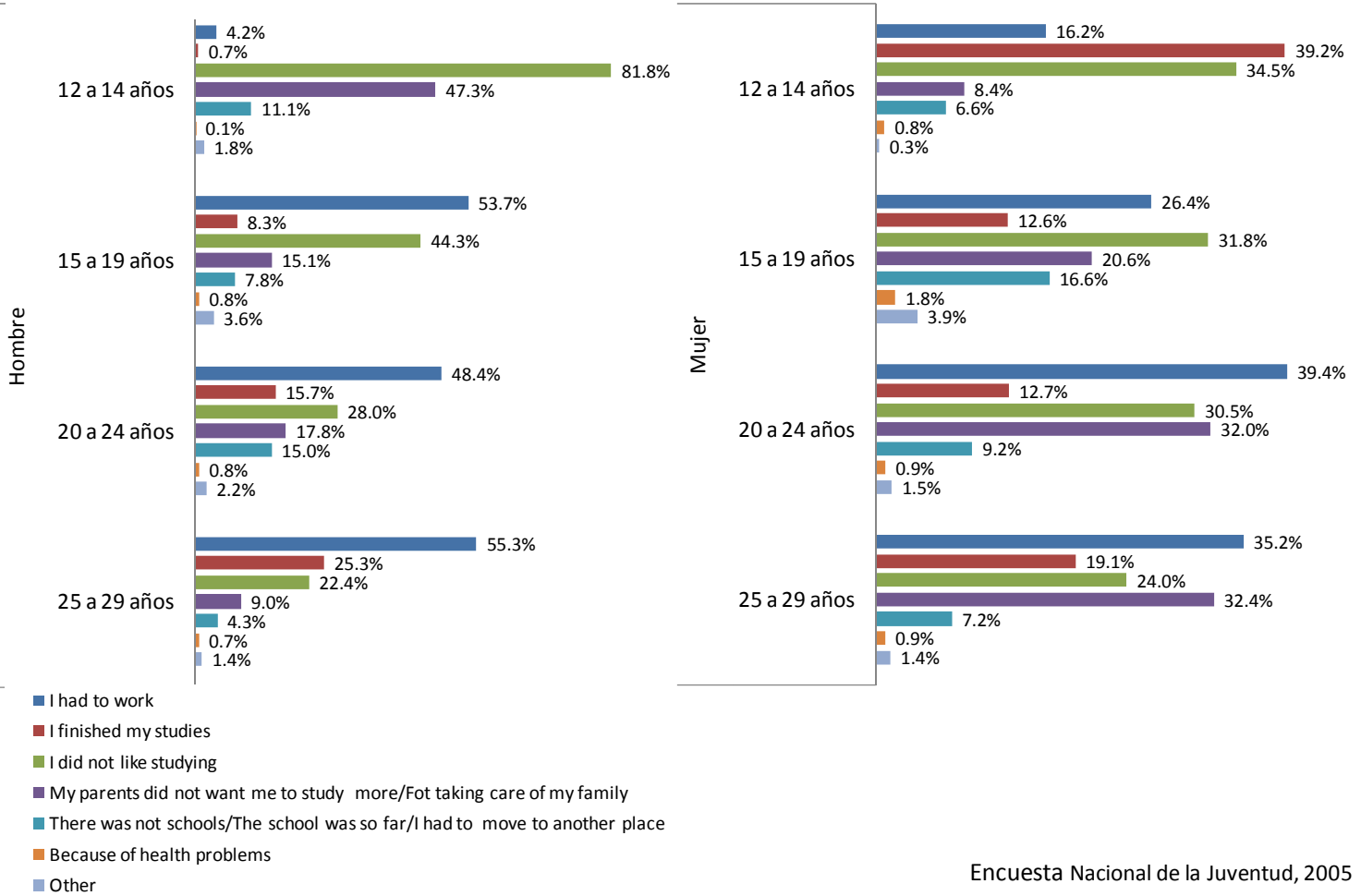


Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2005



Why did you leave school?

National



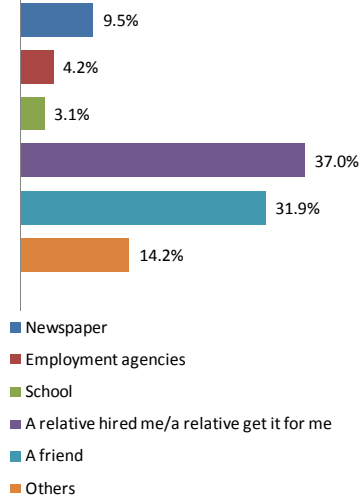
In general, the young boys of 12 to 14 have little pressure to leave school and work. On the other hand, young girls of 12 to 14 have much more pressure to leave school and go to work, 16% compared to the expressed sense of necessity of 4% for boys. Nonetheless, when the boys get to the 15 to 19 age range, 54% of them say they have to go to work (an increment of 14 times over the pressure on the group of 12 to 14. The young girls of 15 to 19 who say they have to work is 26%, an increment of less than two times over the younger group.

Those who do not like to study decrease in number from the 12 to 14 year old group to the 15 to 19 group. In the 12 to 14 group of boys, some 82% do not like to study, but this percentage goes down to 44% in the 14 to 19 group of boys (still high, but a drop of nearly 50%). Girls of 12 to 14 do not like to study at the level of 35%. This percentage drops only to 32% in the 15 to 19 range. There is a continued decline in the percentages of those who do not like to study by gender, until in the 25 to 29 category the young men register 22% and the young women 24%.



How did you get your first job?

National



Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2005

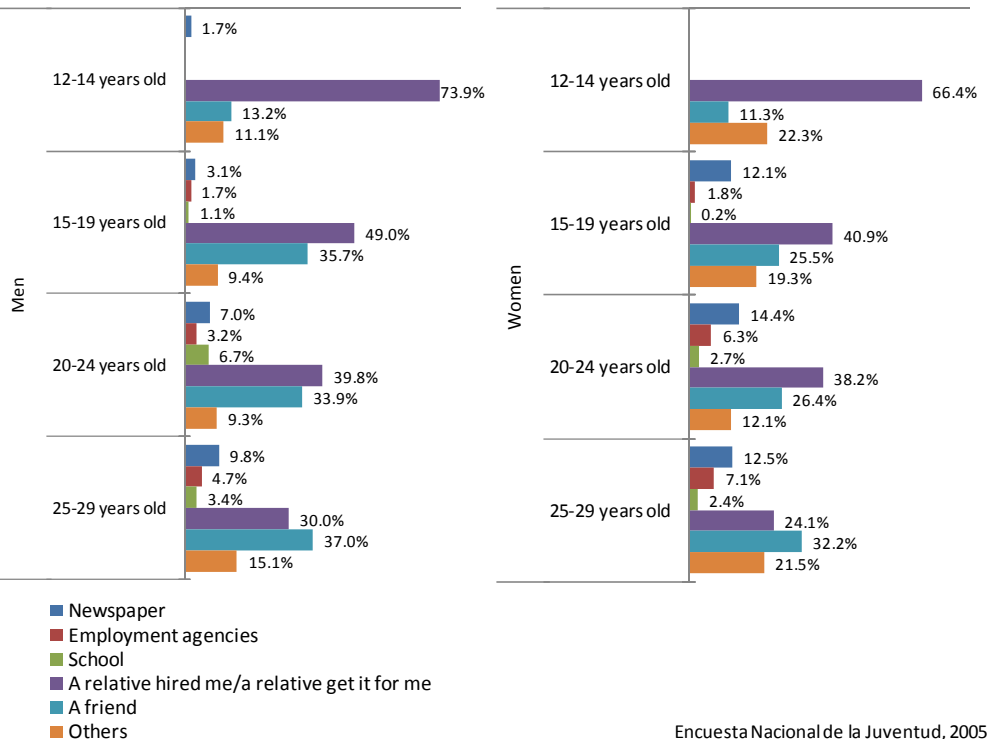
Those who feel pressure from their parents to leave school also experience a differentiated change by gender. Young boys of 12 to 14 register 47% feeling pressure from their parents, while young girls of that age register only 8%. Nonetheless, in the category of 15 to 19 years, young boys with pressure from parents and family show a drop to 15%, and the young girls with this same pressure increases to 21%.

It shouldn't be a surprise that young people, women as well as men, quickly pass into the informal economy on entry into the labor market. Looking for their first job turns on the combined factor of contacts with family and/or friends in the amount of 69%. The school or employment agencies appear to be minimal importance overall. Nonetheless the job wanted ads are important. In fact, the newspaper as source has 3 times the weight of the school, and more than twice the weight of employment agencies.

For the students leaving school for a first job in the category of 12 to 14 years old, the family is overwhelmingly important – 73% of the boys, and 66% of the girls. The family continues to be important as the students get older, but it is the role of friends for first job connections that grows so that by the 25 to 29 category, 37% of the young men depend on friends, compared to 30% on the family; and with women, 32% depend on friends, compared with 24% on family.

How did you get your first job?

By gender and age



Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2005



OBSERVATIONS

There is a long tradition of blaming youth for their problems and those of the society in which they live. Whether it was in Athens four centuries before the Modern Era, in Rome four centuries into the Modern Era, in 19th century London or 1960s California, young people have been blamed. In no instance that we can see have the criticisms been just or merited. Again and again, it looks like older people blaming others for their own failures and confusions. The current situation in Mexico appears to be another example of this very human dynamic.

There is a complex interplay between the growth of a human and the context of the society. When an economy is not producing jobs and an educational system is not preparing the young for life in their epoch, a crisis like that of the “nini’s” emerges. But, the underlying “nini” problem is that of the society/government that is neither generating employment nor education. The impact on youth and young adults of a lack of work and education opportunities is an important challenge for us and others in the field.

Since the controversy over the number of young people in Mexico not studying nor working, there has been an official effort to adjust the number down, but more insidiously to blame young people themselves for a lack of entrepreneurial values (various Federal Government spokespeople in the context of the World Youth Conference in Guanajuato) and their families for failure to inculcate such values (studies published by the University of Guadalajara, Jalisco). The reality is that the National Poll of Youth completed by a team from the UNAM in 2000, 2005* and now working on 2010 brings us some important insight into the dynamics of youth – not only their experiences with work and education, but their views on health, sexuality, religion and public policies. We will continue to participate in studying related themes because they open up windows into the national reality, and the possibilities for reform.

Dan Lund
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*Source of the 22%, 7.4+m, figure for the “not studying and not working” youth in Mexico.