An assessment of the data sources on fertility in Mexico

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INTRODUCTION

Since the mid 20th century, information on fertility in the country has been collected by means of the civil registration system and population censuses. Fertility surveys have been collected since the mid-seventies and, in recent years, there is data on Birth Records provided by the Health System to births delivered in clinics and hospitals.

Concern. Data sources on Mexico’s fertility levels and trends tell different stories. Each data source has its strengths and limitations that have varied in time. Although the general trend in data quality is to improve over time, there is not a full agreement on the fertility level and trends even for the near past, when data sources are more numerous.

MEXICAN DATA SOURCES ON FERTILITY

The main data sources on fertility in Mexico are:
- Civil Registration System:
  - births by year of registration and year of birth from 1985 to 2014.
  - date of birth of last child born alive (number of births in the preceding year of the census; only in 2000, 2010 and 2015),
  - population by sex and age (own children approach),
  - women by number of children ever born alive.
- Birth Record
  - births that take place in the Health System premises from 2008 to 2015.

Objective. Evaluate data on births from civil register’s records for the last three decades (1985 to 2014) and compare the results with data from other sources.

Civil Registration data

**Advantages:**
- no major timing distortions,
- data provided by parents,
- data at the population level,
- continuous data source.

**Shortcomings:**
- late registration,
- multiple registration,
- omission.

LATE REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS

Trends in multiple registration and omission are difficult to disentangle from those in late registration. However, a clear trend towards an earlier registration is observed at least in the last 10 years (figures 1 and 2).

We suppose that estimating yearly births by following birth cohorts until the fourth year after the birth is a reasonable approach to face late registration.

We estimate the total fertility rate from the number of births registered in each year, as well as from other data sources, including vital registration, fertility surveys and demographic community studies.

CONCLUSIONS

Births from the civil registration provide a plausible estimation of levels and trend of fertility in Mexico during these years of fertility decline.

However, one should maintain a critical approach in the estimation of a series of births and the fertility levels and trends given the variation in the data quality during the analyzed period.

The improvement of birth registration over time is caused by an institutionalization process where birth certificate is required to have access to schools, health services and social programs.

More elements are needed to propose an adjustment in the number of births and the period fertility data. We will further investigate patterns of late and multiple registration. Because of deep regional disparities in the institutionalization process, we will develop our future research at the state level with the civil registration data and other data sources at the population level. This will allow us to estimate a unified series of period fertility data in Mexico and to provide a more accurate picture of the fertility transition in the country.

DATA REFERENCES AND AUTHORS

Own calculations with data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INEGI) and the Secretaría de Salud, México.

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