

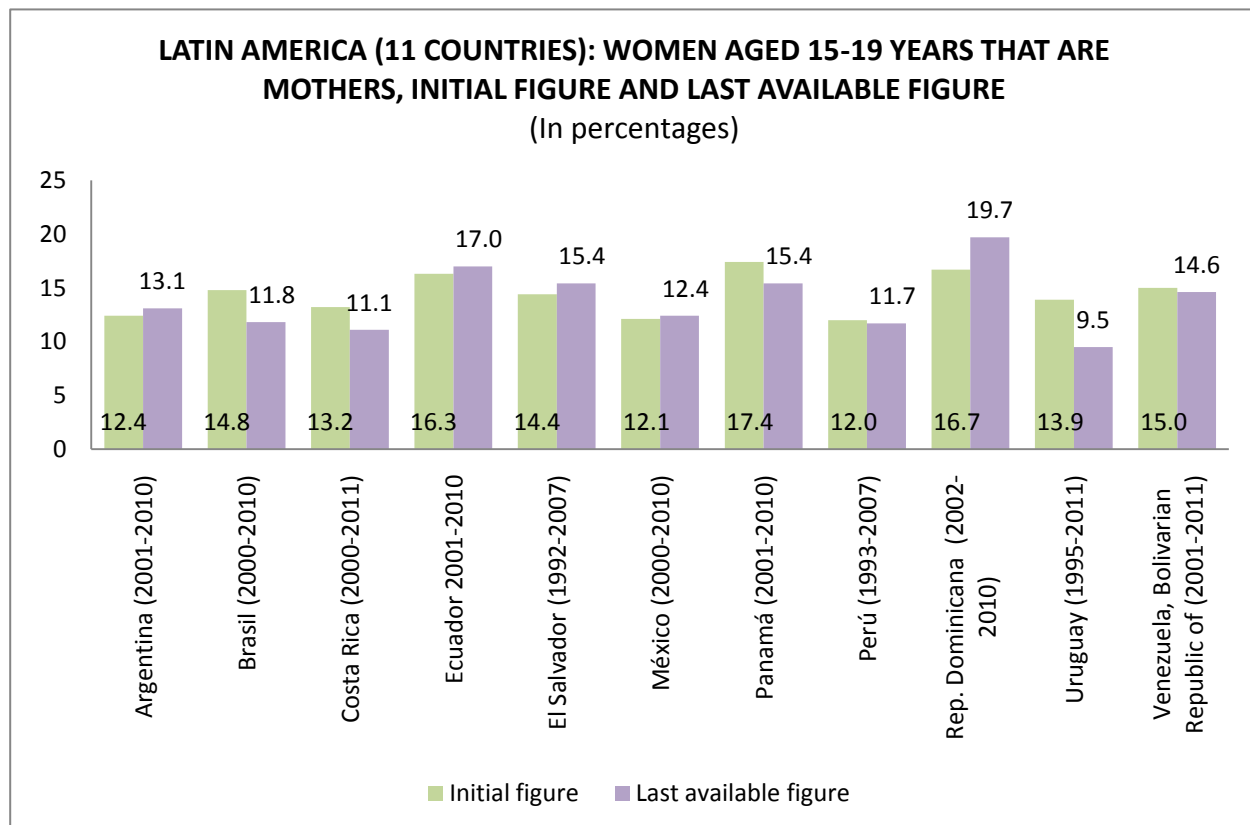
Gender Equality Observatory

for Latin America and the Caribbean



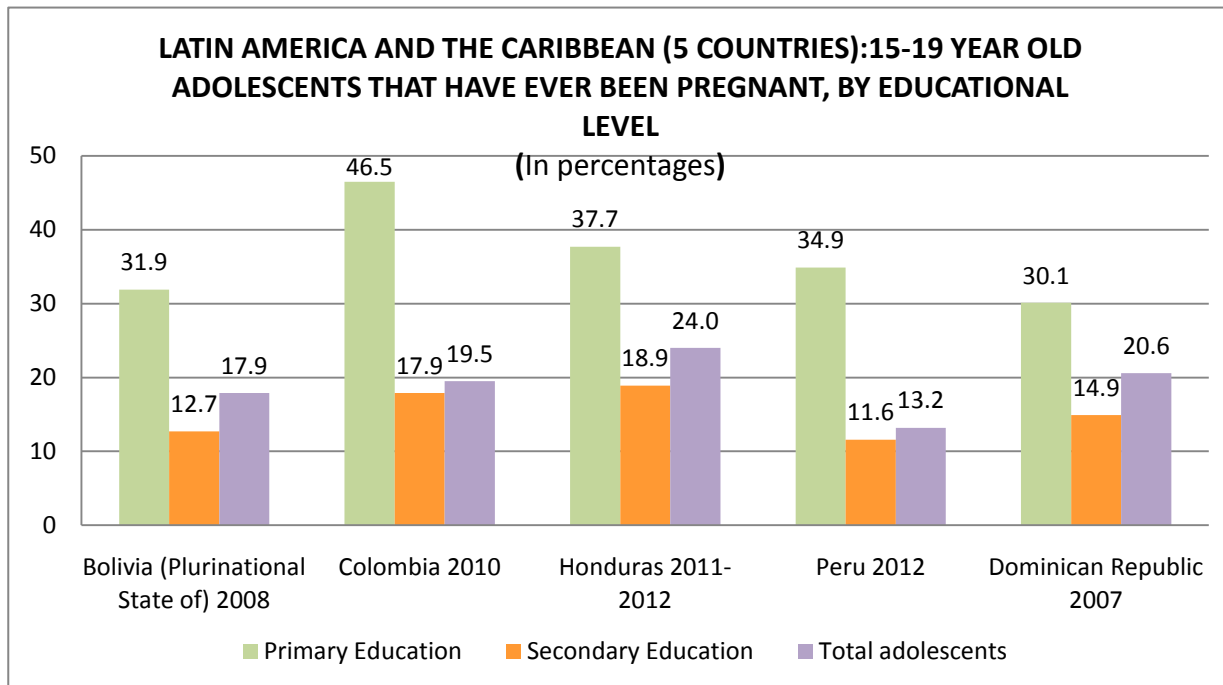
MATERNITY IN ADOLESCENTS: INEQUALITY IN DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS

- The fertility rate in adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the highest in the world, surpassed only by the countries of sub-Saharan Africa.
- Pregnancy and maternity in adolescents are an expression of social, cultural, gender, ethnic/race inequities, among others.
- In the majority of cases it is a consequence of the deficient access to sexual and reproductive health services and holistic sexual education, as well as proof that the rights of girls and adolescents are not being adequately guaranteed.
- The fertility rate in adolescents in the region is resistant to fall, unlike fertility rates for older women. In some countries it has even been increasing.



Fuente: [Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe \(CEPAL\), Observatorio de Igualdad de Género de América Latina y el Caribe, sobre la base de datos censales.](#)

- The persistence of teenage pregnancy is especially problematic because although occurring in all social levels, remains concentrated in groups with a lower socioeconomic and educational level.



Source: Demographic and health surveys (DHS), final country reports found at www.measuredhs.com

- Pregnancy and maternity during adolescence contribute to perpetuate the poverty as it is linked to school dropout and the consequent difficulties to cope with working life.
- Pregnancy during adolescence exposes girls and young women to a greater prevalence of physical or sexual violence at the hands of their partners; the frequency is two to three times greater in women that had their first child before age 17 in comparison with women who were mothers after age 25. (See [PAHO](#))

What are the main challenges in facing adolescent pregnancy?

- The States of the region have made commitments related to sexual and reproductive health in the International Conference on Population and Development (El Cairo, 1994) and ratified them in the World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). These commitments include guaranteeing access to quality healthcare services to assure a reduction in mortality and maternal morbidity; the universal access to reproductive health by 2015 is one of the objectives of Millennium Goal 5.
- Improve administrative registers and statistics on adolescent pregnancy, as well as making pregnancy in the 10-14 year-old age group more visible, as it is often a result of sexual violence.
- Promote measures to allow adolescents access to information, education and sexual and reproductive health services.
- Implement comprehensive sexual education policies that include the importance of gender relations and the development of adolescents' capacity to take informed decisions concerning their sexual and reproductive health.
- Develop actions differentiating between the measures for the prevention of the first adolescent pregnancy and the policies to address a second adolescent pregnancy.
- Guarantee the permanence of pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers in the school system, as well as developing programs that promote the workforce insertion of adolescent and young mothers.