

THE FAMILY CONTEXT OF ADULTHOOD TRANSITIONS IN MEXICO

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Background. Research on the transitions to adulthood in Latin America has increased in recent years (Juárez & Gayet, 2014; Menezes Dos Santos et al., 2021; Pesando et al., 2021), with Mexico being a country of key interest (Coubes et al., 2017; Echarri Cánovas & Pérez Amador, 2007; Salas & de Oliveira, 2009; Solís, 2016). Most outcomes in the field focus on the sequence and timing of events based on European and North American experiences, assuming normative trajectories to adulthood guided by age-related and societal standards (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011). These include completing education, entering the labor market, leaving the parental home, and forming an independent family (Modell et al., 1976). However, this predominantly Western model might not apply to other societies due to the influence of sociocultural and socioeconomic aspects. Most studies attempt to locate Mexico and other Latin American countries in the debate about the eventual postponement or advancement of the transitions to adulthood (Menezes Dos Santos et al., 2021). Yet, little attention is paid to the constraints derived from the societal structure. Persistent social inequities shape life from an early age, and the opportunities and constrictions faced by young people from different backgrounds lead to diverse processes of adulthood transitions (Salas & de Oliveira, 2009, p. 277). This makes it challenging to draw a comparison between Western and Latin American countries and to situate the latter in the theoretical framework of Second Demographic Transition Theory (Salas & de Oliveira, 2009) without considering the contextual historical and social setting (Lesthaeghe, 2020).

Even though independent residence is a commonly used marker of emancipation and a milestone for family formation (Juárez & Gayet, 2014), transitions to adulthood in Mexico do not always occur after leaving the parental home (Juárez & Gayet, 2014; Solís, 2016), as would be posited by the SDTs (Billari et al., 2001; Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011; Lesthaeghe, 2020). Extended families facilitate youth transitions and support the precociousness of family domain events, especially at younger ages and among individuals with lower socioeconomic status (Cienfuegos & Therborn, 2023). In Mexico, events like cohabitation, marriage, and/or childbearing commonly begin in the parents' household or within living arrangements that include other relatives as parents-in-law (Binstock & Melo Vieira, 2011; Echarri Cánovas & Pérez Amador, 2007; Giorguli Saucedo, 2016). Despite emergent trends of postponing transitions, the country still displays stable trends of family formation early in the life course, with young mean ages at first union and first child (Esteve et al., 2022; Galambos & Martínez, 2007), and high heterogeneity between population groups (Giorguli Saucedo, 2016). Studies in Mexico conclude that economic and family characteristics constrain young adults' options and decisions (Echarri Cánovas & Pérez Amador, 2007; Salas & de Oliveira, 2009), resulting in a wide diversity of trajectories. Additionally, previous research further notes a persistent degree of household complexity across Latin America and Caribbean countries, with a stable or increasing proportion of extended families (Becca et al., 2024, *unpublished manuscript*).

We contribute to the literature on adulthood transitions in Latin America by examining the family context in which family-related events occur, such as starting cohabitation, childbearing, and single parenting, focusing on extended (complex) living arrangements. We start from the hypothesis that the co-occurrence of early transitions (Esteve et al., 2022) and the relevant incidence of family transitions occurring within the parental home and/or extended living arrangements (Binstock & Melo Vieira, 2011; Echarri Cánovas & Pérez Amador, 2007; Giorguli

Saucedo, 2016) are interrelated, and provide a possible explanation for the stable pattern of household complexity seen in previous studies (Becca et al., 2024, *unpublished manuscript*). Empirically, we disentangle the linkages between family transitions and household complexity in the Mexican context. Retrospective data from Mexico (*Encuesta Demográfica Retrospectiva - EDER*) offers an opportunity to explore the living arrangements of individuals over their life and to link them to their family trajectories.

Research objectives:

- I. Estimate the prevalence of living in complex living arrangements when forming a union (first year of cohabitation), childbearing (first child), single parenting
- II. Testing differences by sex, age, and cohorts
- III. Predict the probability of living in extended living arrangements during family transitions (cohabitation, childbearing, single parenthood) and the relationship with socio-demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

Data and Methods. We use retrospective data from the Encuesta Demográfica Retrospectiva 2017 (EDER), a nationally representative survey that provides information on the temporal nature of socio-demographic processes on migration, education, marriage, fertility, mortality, and residential arrangements in Mexico. It includes person-year information of 23,831 individuals (886,976 person-year observations) between 20 and 54 years old, from age 0 to present. For each person-year observation, details about the individual’s living arrangements are provided, allowing to create family typologies over their lives and tracing family transitions (union formation, first child, union dissolution, etc.).

Table 1. Classification of living arrangements.

Type of family	Subcategory
I. Unipersonal	1 Ego lives alone
	2 Ego lives only with partner
II. Simple	3 Ego lives only with parents
	4 Ego lives only with offspring
	5 Ego lives only with partner and offspring
III. Extended	6 Ego lives with partner and parents
	7 Ego lives with other relatives
	8 Ego lives with partner and other relatives
	9 Ego lives with offspring and parents
	10 Ego lives with parents and other relatives
	11 Ego lives with offspring and other relatives
	12 Ego lives with partner, offspring, and parents
	13 Ego lives with offspring, parents, and other relatives
	14 Ego lives with partner, parents, and other relatives
	15 Ego lives with partner, offspring, and other relatives
16 Ego lives with partner, offspring, parents, and other relatives	

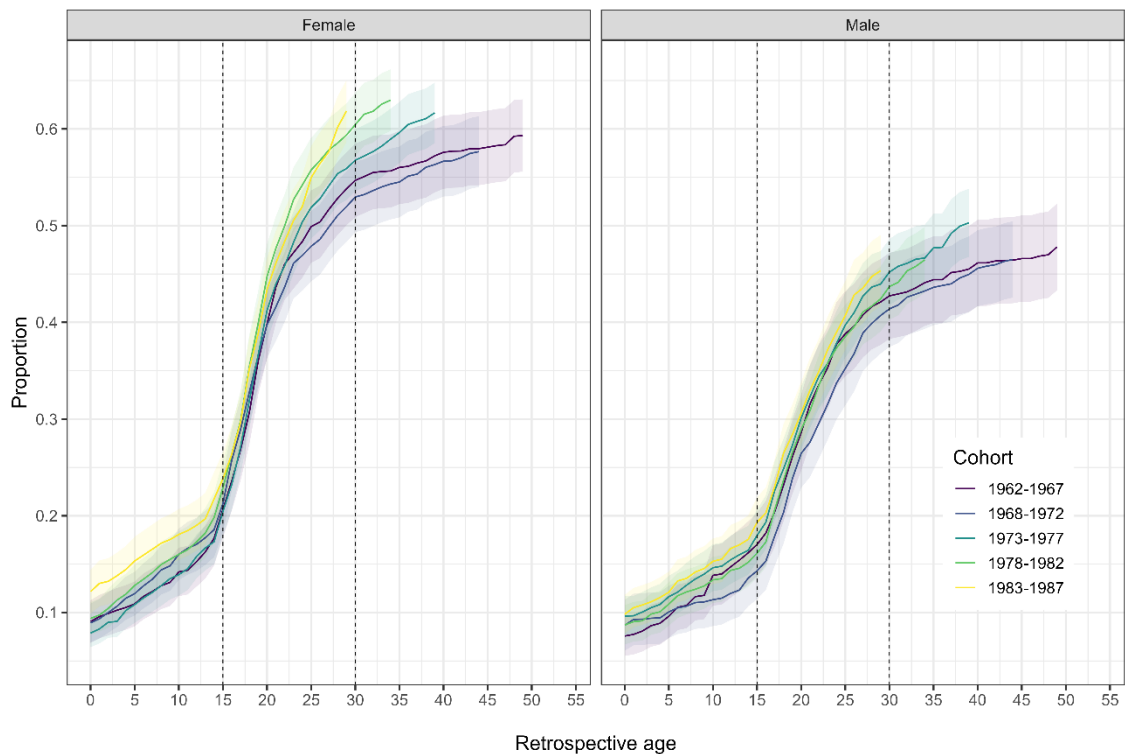
For our analysis, we create a set of variables to classify ego’s living arrangements in each year of life and differentiate 16 family categories, as shown in Table 1, broadly divided between unipersonal/simple (nuclear) and extended families. Similarly, we identify the years ego started cohabiting with a partner and/or child for the first time. These are the years of interest in our analysis. Therefore, we know whether these family events correspond with co-residing in an extended household.

The second part of the analysis consists of a multivariate logistic regression to predict the probability of living in extended arrangements based on a set of independent variables on sociodemographic characteristics of individuals, such as educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and urban/rural residence, union duration, while controlling for sex and cohort.

Preliminary results.

Figure 1 shows the cumulative proportion of individuals who have lived at least one year in extended living arrangements, by sex and cohort from birth to age 54. The steepest increase in the proportion of people in extended families occurs between 15 and 30 years of age (dashed lines), which represents the age range in which most individuals experience family formation transitions such as leaving the parental home, forming a union, and/or childbearing. The increase is steeper and faster for women (60% on average) than for men (46% on average). The analysis by cohort shows a gradual increase in the proportion among younger cohorts for both sexes, especially in the late twenties.

Figure 1. Cumulative proportion of individuals who lived at least one year in extended living arrangements, by sex, age, and cohort (N= 23,831)

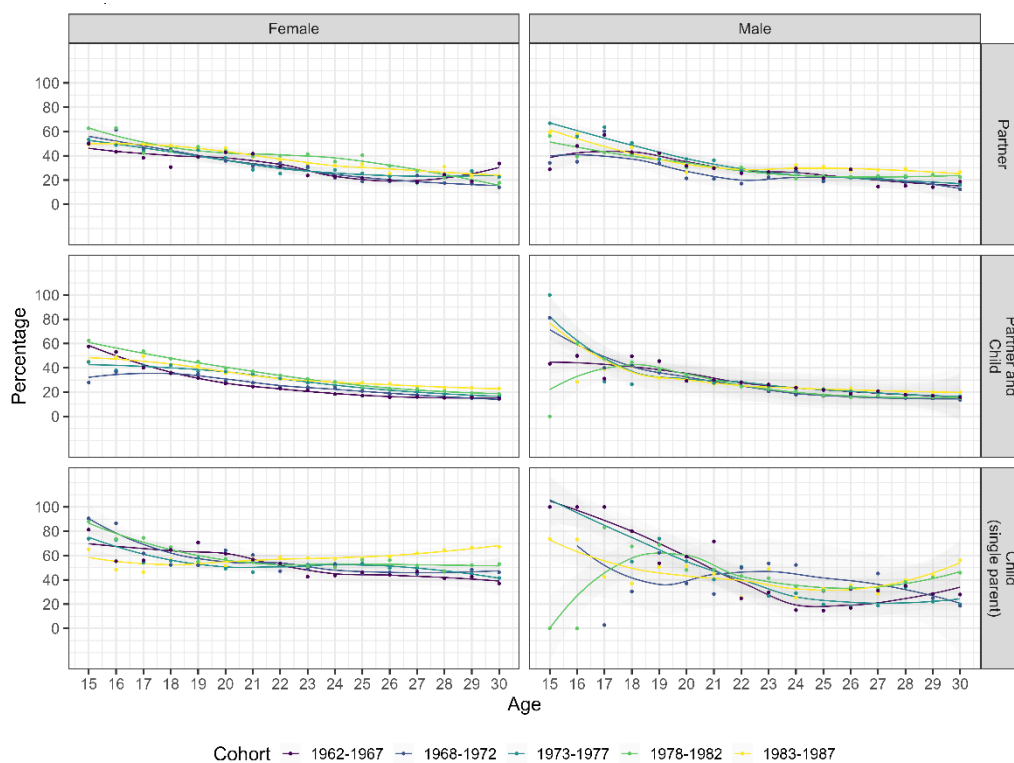


Source: own elaboration based on EDER 2017

Figure 2 illustrates the proportion of people living in extended families during the first year of cohabitation, childbearing, or as single parents among all people experiencing the event. Results

are by sex, age, and cohort. Only individuals older than 30 years old at the moment of the survey (2017) are included, and retrospective age is a subset from 15 to 30 years old. Among young adults who start cohabitation with a partner, or with a partner and a child, around 50% of women and 40% of men do it in extended living arrangements. For single parents the proportion are even higher, exceeding 60%. In all cohorts, the proportion decreases linearly as age increases, except for single parents. Minor differences exist between cohorts. Single mothers in the 1983-1987 cohort show stable prevalences after age 25, at around 70%. Overall, these findings indicate that younger cohorts rely more on extended family arrangements than older ones during family transitions. Further analysis is necessary to confirm these results and test the significance of these differences.

Figure 2. Proportion of individuals living in extended arrangements during the first year of cohabitation, childbearing, or single parenthood (N=16,784), weighted.



Source: own elaboration based on EDER 2017

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