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Is Latin America starting to retreat from early and universal childbearing?

Luis Rosero-Bixby
Teresa Castro-Martin
Teresa Martín-García

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Abstract

The 2000 censuses show that the proportion of women below age 30 who are mothers has dropped substantially in most Latin America countries, suggesting that the social imperative of early motherhood, which has long prevailed in the region, is weakening. Surveys conducted in 14 Latin American countries in 2006 also show a strong link between childlessness and higher education across several cohorts. We discuss whether the recent increase in childlessness among young women reflects a shift towards later childbearing, a novel trend in the Latin American context, and also whether it may signal an emerging retreat from universal childbearing in the region.

Author's affiliation

[Luis Rosero-Bixby](#)

Central American Population Center (CCP) of the University of Costa Rica (UCR), Costa Rica

[Teresa Castro-Martin](#)

Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC), Spain

[Teresa Martín-García](#)

Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC), Spain

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