

**At age 19 the young adults in the Young Lives Older Cohort have reached a stage in life when they face critical choices and decisions. A large number of them have already completed school and many are enrolled in tertiary education. We identify substantial differences by gender in tertiary education and in use of time. These differences are likely to be partially driven by early pregnancy (a quarter of the girls are already mothers), but we also see differences according to household wealth level. From a policy perspective, initiatives oriented to improve education and employment opportunities for young people should consider gender as a crucial factor equalizing dimension.**

## Introduction

In recent years secondary school completion rates among 17- to 19-year-olds in Peru have steadily increased (from 48% in 2001 to 69% in 2013), according to official statistics. As part of this trend, the gap in the number of young people completing school in urban and rural areas has been reduced—although it has not disappeared completely.

In this period as young people finish their schooling, opportunities to find good jobs, to access training or to enrol in higher education become the key challenges they face. On the one hand the context is favourable: there are more jobs available as a consequence of recent growth within the economy, and at the same time there has been a sustained increase in the number of private institutions offering higher education. In addition, the government has introduced support for poorer young people to access higher education (through the scholarship programme *Beca 18*, for example) and for job training (e.g. *Pro-Joven*). On the other hand, the decisions young people make at this life-stage are often constrained not only by the current opportunities available to them but also by the resources that were available to their families during their formative years, as well as opportunity costs. Young adults, especially young women, face many challenges in other areas, for instance early pregnancy and risk behaviours reduce their opportunities to invest in education and job training. There has been a lack of analysis of the multiplicity of challenges facing young people in Peru due to lack of data. The Young Lives study provides a chance to carry out such analysis from a longitudinal perspective, looking at how young people's circumstances early in life affect their later outcomes.

We have been following the lives of the Older Cohort of the Young Lives study in Peru since 2002 when they were aged between 7 and 8. At the time of the Round 4 survey in 2013, they were aged 18 to 19 years old. In this fact sheet we characterise the situation of this cohort in multiple dimensions and identify differences associated with family characteristics and gender. We focus on four areas: (1) education, (2) employment and time-use, (3) fertility and family formation, and

(4) sexual and risk behaviours. Results are reported by gender, ethnicity, maternal education level, original area of residence (urban or rural in 2002), and family expenditure (bottom and top quintile in 2006). We take into consideration the sample design (see the accompanying fact sheet on Changes in Household Welfare for details). A summary of the results is reported in Table 2 for selected outcomes.

## Key findings

- At the age of 19, 70% of the Young Lives Older Cohort had completed secondary education (very close to the national average for that age group). Approximately 12% were still in secondary school (mainly those who born later within the cohort), but 16% had left school without gaining a secondary-level qualification.
- Young people from poorer families are less likely to have completed school than their peers, but we find no evidence of gender or ethnic differences in school completion rates.
- 39% of the cohort had started tertiary education, either in university (17%) or a technical institution (22%).
- Children from better-off households are much more likely to go on to university (35%) than children from the poorest families (just 3%). One per cent of the children received a scholarship from the *Beca 18* programme.
- A quarter of the young people are now working at the same time as continuing with their education. Only a fifth are enrolled in formal education and not working. 13% are neither working nor studying (mainly young women who have a child to care for).
- Many of the young people had entered relationships and started a family. Around 13% already live with a partner (20% of the girls and 7% of boys) and 15% have had a child (almost a quarter of the girls, but just 6% of boys).

## Access to education

For the following analysis we focus on the sample of young people who were interviewed in all four survey rounds (631 in total). As Table 1 shows, 70% of them had completed secondary education, very close to the national average for that age group. Approximately 12% were still attending secondary school (mainly the children who were younger within the cohort), but about 16% of young people had left school without gaining a secondary-level qualification. Children from a poorer background are less likely to have completed school than their peers, but it is encouraging that we find no evidence of gender or ethnic differences in school completion rates.

By 2013 39% of the cohort was enrolled in tertiary education, either in a university (17%) or a technical institution (22%), and 1% received one of the limited number of sought-after scholarships from the *Beca 18* programme. The level of access to higher education is relatively high compared to the average for the Latin American region and the average for middle-income countries (World Bank Indicators), and is aligned with the increase in the number of higher education institutions in the country. However, these findings should be interpreted with caution, not only because it is not yet clear that the labour market will be able to expand to absorb this supply of highly qualified young people, but also because the quality of some of the new education institutions has been questioned. The new university law passed recently by Congress (*Ley Universitaria*) aims to improve quality at this level.

Among young people starting university we identify differences according to family background that are larger than those observed for school completion: 35% of young people from the richest 20% of households had started university compared with only 3% of young people from the poorest households. Moreover, we also see gender and ethnic differences in favour of boys and young people whose mother's native language is Spanish. None of these inequalities appears relevant for access to technical institutions. This could be related to the fact that technical institutions are more geographically spread across the country than universities.

## Work and time-use

How do the young adults of the Older Cohort spend their time? Despite the high levels of access to tertiary education (40%), involvement in paid activities has become a central aspect of everyday life for many of them. On a regular day, on average, they report spending 3.7 hours working in paid activities, 3.4 hours working in non-paid activities including

household chores, and 4.7 hours studying (compared to 0.3, 4.5 and 6.4 hours respectively at ages 11 to 12 in Round 2). Boys spend more time studying and more time working in paid activities than girls, and girls spend more time working in non-paid activities. Some of these differences were already visible at ages 11 to 12 but the differences have increased.

As might be expected by age 19, a large proportion of the cohort (39%) report having worked in the last 12 months and no longer being enrolled in formal education, while a second group (26%) combine both work and studying. Only 22% are currently enrolled in formal education and not working, and 13% are neither working nor studying (mainly young women who have a child to care for). The young people who are working and no longer in education are more likely to come from poor backgrounds, while the opposite is the case for those who are still studying. Our results also show that boys are more likely than girls to be combining work with studying at this age.

Among the young people who have had a job during the last 12 months, most are involved in non-agricultural activities (74%) and 21% work in a family business. It is noteworthy that only 14% report having a written contract with their employer, and very few receive formal labour benefits such as health insurance or access to social security.

## Fertility and family formation

Besides the transition from school to higher education or the labour market, one of the most distinctive features observed for the Older Cohort in Round 4 is that many have started to form a family. Around 13% already live with a partner (with cohabitation prevailing over marriage) and 14.5% already have children. A fifth of the girls are living with a partner compared to just 7% of the boys, and almost a quarter of the girls have already had a baby compared to one in twelve of the boys. It is noteworthy that household wealth level makes little difference in the likelihood of early family formation, except in that early pregnancy is more frequent among girls who are originally from rural areas.

**Table 1. Marriage and fertility at age 19 (2013)**

	Girls	%	Boys	%
Single	232	80.3	307	93.3
Married or cohabiting	57	19.7	18	6.7
Total	290		325	
Has had a child	70	23.9	15	5.8

\*Percentages are adjusted to take into account the sampling framework.

## Adolescent risk behaviours

We asked the young people to complete a confidential self-administered questionnaire (SAQ), which covered behaviours such as smoking, use of alcohol and illegal drugs, sexual behaviour, use of contraception, and other similar issues. Almost all of the sample (96%) consented to complete the self-administered questionnaire, and there were relatively few missing answers/incomplete data (just 1.7% of answers related to tobacco use, 1.5% of answers relating to alcohol, and 1.7% of answers related to age of first sexual relationship).

Based on this information, we calculated percentages of young people who admitted trying or using both legal drugs (cigarettes and alcohol) and illegal drugs (marihuana, cocaine, etc.) and find that 18% consume cigarettes at least once a month, 9% consume alcohol at least once a month, and 11% had tried at least one illegal drug (mainly marihuana). A gender gap is evident, as boys are more likely to consume cigarettes and alcohol and to have tried drugs. On the other hand, we do not detect evidence of systematic differences according to household wealth. In terms of sexual behaviour, 67% report having had sexual intercourse (79% of boys and 53% of girls). The average age of the first sexual relationship is 16.3 (close to 16 for males and 17 for females). It is concerning that almost a third (29%) say they did not use any contraceptive at last intercourse.

## Conclusions

The data give us a very up-to-date picture of the reality of daily life for young people in their late teens in Peru. It is encouraging that we see no gender gaps in school completion rates, and relatively high levels of access to tertiary education. However, these results need to be interpreted with some caution.

First, it is unclear whether the labour market will be able to absorb a future increase in the supply of qualified workers and indeed how qualified will they be (if the quality of the institutions available to them is not assured). Second, there are important differences in the likelihood of completing secondary school and going on to university according to early-life socioeconomic status, which means the field is far from even. Third, we identify clear gender gaps in the post-school period: the way they spend their time is quite different for young men or for young women and early pregnancy is likely to be one of the reasons for this.

From a policy perspective, some of our results highlight the role of gender as a dimension which should be taken into consideration in the design of public programmes which aim to improve access to higher education (such as *Beca 18*) and vocational training for young people from marginalised backgrounds. Similarly, programmes designed to improve sex education, family planning and reproductive health are likely to be equally important as a way to improve study and work opportunities for young women.

**Table 2. Education and employment of young people age 19 in 2013**

	%	Education					Employment			
		School enrolment			Higher education		Only working	Only studying	Working and studying	Not working or studying <sup>1</sup>
		Secondary school completed	Still in school	Left school before completion	Technical institution	University				
Average (n=631)	100.0	69.8	12.0	18.1	22.2	17.2	39.3	21.8	25.6	13.4
<b>Age</b>										
17 and 18	54.2	66.6	17.1	16.2	19.5	16.1	35.7	25.6	24.7	13.9
19 or more	45.8	74.0	5.9	20.1	25.3	18.4	43.6	16.6	26.7	13.1
Gap		7.4**	-11.0***	3.9	5.7	2.3**	7.9**	-9.0***	2.0	-0.9
<b>Gender</b>										
Boys	51.8	69.9	12.2	17.9	21.5	20.9	41.4	19.7	31.3	7.7
Girls	48.2	69.6	11.9	18.4	23.0	13.2	37.0	24.0	19.6	19.4
Gap		0.3	0.4	-0.6	-1.5	7.6**	4.3	-4.3	11.7***	-11.7***
<b>Household wealth level (real household expenditure per capita in Round 2)</b>										
Top quintile	15.3	83.6	7.1	9.3	19.6	35.0	23.6	28.2	29.1	19.1
Bottom quintile	28.4	52.3	23.0	24.6	20.7	3.0	46.8	14.0	28.0	11.2
Gap		31.3***	-16.0***	-15.4***	-1.1	32.0**	-23.2***	14.2***	1.1	7.9*
<b>Area of residence (in Round 1)</b>										
Urban	55.5	73.4	10.6	16.0	26.9	21.7	34.5	31.3	23.0	11.1
Rural	44.5	65.3	13.9	20.8	16.3	11.6	45.1	9.9	28.7	16.2
Gap		8.0**	-3.3	-4.8	10.7	10.2**	-10.6***	21.4***	-5.7	-5.1*
<b>Mother's first language</b>										
Spanish	53.9	72.7	9.3	17.9	26.3	19.3	36.7	29.0	22.4	11.9
Indigenous	43.2	66.6	15.2	18.2	16.9	14.7	43.2	12.3	29.8	14.7
Gap		6.1	-5.9**	-0.3	9.5	4.6**	-6.5	16.8***	-7.5**	-2.8
<b>Maternal education level</b>										
Higher education	48.2	90.6	6.4	3.0	33.9	41.4	13.9	48.7	25.2	12.2
Complete primary or secondary	44.6	79.5	9.0	11.4	25.6	19.6	37.0	26.5	23.7	12.8
Incomplete primary or less	9.2	58.0	15.6	26.4	17.3	10.9	46.1	12.5	27.7	13.7
Gap		32.6***	-9.2*	-23.5***	16.7	30.5**	-32.2***	36.2***	-2.5	-1.5

Data cover children interviewed in all 4 survey rounds. Percentages are adjusted to take into account the sampling framework.

Differences are significant at \*\*\*1%, \*\*5% and \*10%. Gaps are expressed in percentage points and calculated using Indigenous, Rural, Incomplete Primary or Less and Bottom Quintile as baseline.

Category of young people not working or studying includes girls who have a child to care for.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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