Work and Family Lives:

Preliminary Findings from the 2023–24 Young Lives Survey (Round 7): Peru

Introduction

For more than 20 years, Young Lives has followed two cohorts, born seven years apart, from infancy into early adulthood in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.[1] This factsheet presents preliminary findings from Round 7 of the Young Lives survey carried out in Peru in 2023–24, when the Younger Cohort was 22 years old and the Older Cohort was 29. It provides an overview of the key labour market, marital and fertility indicators underlining changes over time by comparing the Younger Cohort at age 22 with the Older Cohort at the same age, in 2016, and documenting the Younger Cohort's progression from age 15 to 22. The factsheet also reflects on the implications of the findings for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Headlines

- More Younger Cohort participants are studying at age 22 compared to the Older Cohort at the same age in 2016.
- Most young people who are working are engaged in poor-quality jobs, without a written contract and working long hours.
- There is a significant gender difference in the distribution of work, with women less likely to be employed than men and spending more time on unpaid care work.
- Early marriage and early parenthood for women have decreased over time.
- Current employment, fertility and marital status of the participants are closely related to early life inequalities.

1 Round 7 took place in the Young Lives study sites in Ethiopia, India and Peru. On this occasion, data was not collected in Vietnam due to a change in government procedures for the international transfer of personal data.

Key Findings

- **More Younger Cohort participants are studying at age 22, compared to the Older Cohort at the same age in 2016**. At age 22 in 2023, a higher proportion of Younger Cohort participants (42%) were studying than Older Cohort participants (36%) at the same age.
- **Most young people who are working are engaged in poor-quality jobs, without a written contract and working long hours.** About four out of five Younger Cohort participants who were working did not have a written contract and almost one-third were working more than 48 hours per week.
- **There is a clear gender difference in the distribution of work, that has increased over time**. Women and girls are persistently less likely to be employed than men and boys, with a gender employment gap that was 10 percentage points at age 15 increasing to 22 percentage points at age 22. The gap increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Young women also spend three hours more per day on unpaid care work than young men.
- **Early marriage and early parenthood for women have decreased over time**. At age 22 in 2023, a smaller proportion of women from the Younger Cohort were married, cohabiting or had children, compared to the Older Cohort at the same age in 2016 (44% vs 52%, respectively). The proportion of men who were married, cohabiting or had children was substantially lower than for women (20% of men in the Younger Cohort).
- **Early-life inequalities are reflected in employment, marital and fertility outcomes at age 22**. Participants who were born in poorer households and those whose mother had low education are less likely to be employed and more likely to be married and/or have a child at age 22.

The policy context for work and family lives in Peru

Between 2004 and 2016, Peru experienced significant economic growth, alongside a sustained reduction in poverty, which fell from 58.7% to 20.7% (Banco Central de Reserva 2021). Despite this, during the same period a similar improvement in employment conditions was not seen – informal employment fell only from 80.0% in 2007 to 72.0% in 2016 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática 2019). More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic had adverse effects on the economy, with both GDP and employment levels significantly declining during 2020. In response, the government introduced Reactiva Perú, a financial support programme for companies, as well as subsidies for enterprises and bonuses for poor households to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on employment. At the same time, higher education scholarships and credits were expanded to reduce the negative effects of the pandemic on education.

Although gender inequality in the labour market has been reducing in recent years (World Economic Forum 2023), employment conditions remain precarious for women. The percentage of women who are employed in informal conditions (76.8%) is higher than for men (71.7%), due to women's high participation in microenterprises and as unpaid family workers (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática 2023). To address these gender inequalities, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP) published the National Gender Equality Policy in April 2024. This seeks to tackle both the causes and effects of existing structural discrimination against women.

Methods

This factsheet uses preliminary data from the Young Lives Round 7 survey, which in Peru was collected between June 2023 and January 2024. A total of 2,219 interviews were completed (1,702 with the Younger Cohort and 517 with the Older Cohort), which represents 80.2% of the original sample in Round 1 (Younger Cohort: 82.9%; Older Cohort: 72.4%) (Molina et al. 2025). The analysis used the sampling weights to emulate the original, pro-poor sampling design of the study (Escobal and Flores 2008). Participants from previous rounds who were not interviewed in Round 7 were excluded from the analysis. Participants are classified by area of residence (urban or rural) at the time of data collection, household wealth (top, middle or bottom tercile in 2002) (Briones 2017), gender, maternal language (Spanish or Indigenous languages) and mother's level of education.

What do Young Lives participants do?

More Younger Cohort participants are studying at age 22 (42%), compared to the Older Cohort at the same age in 2016 (36%). Overall in 2023, 51% of the 22-year-old Younger Cohort were working only, 32% were working and studying, 10% were studying only and 6% were not in employment, education or training (Figure 1). For the Older Cohort at the same age in 2016, 55% were working only, 27% were working and studying, 9% were studying only and 9% were not in employment, education or training. This is consistent with the improvements in higher education enrolment in Peru in recent years. Although the proportion of participants working within both cohorts have changed over the years, at age 22 it was similar.

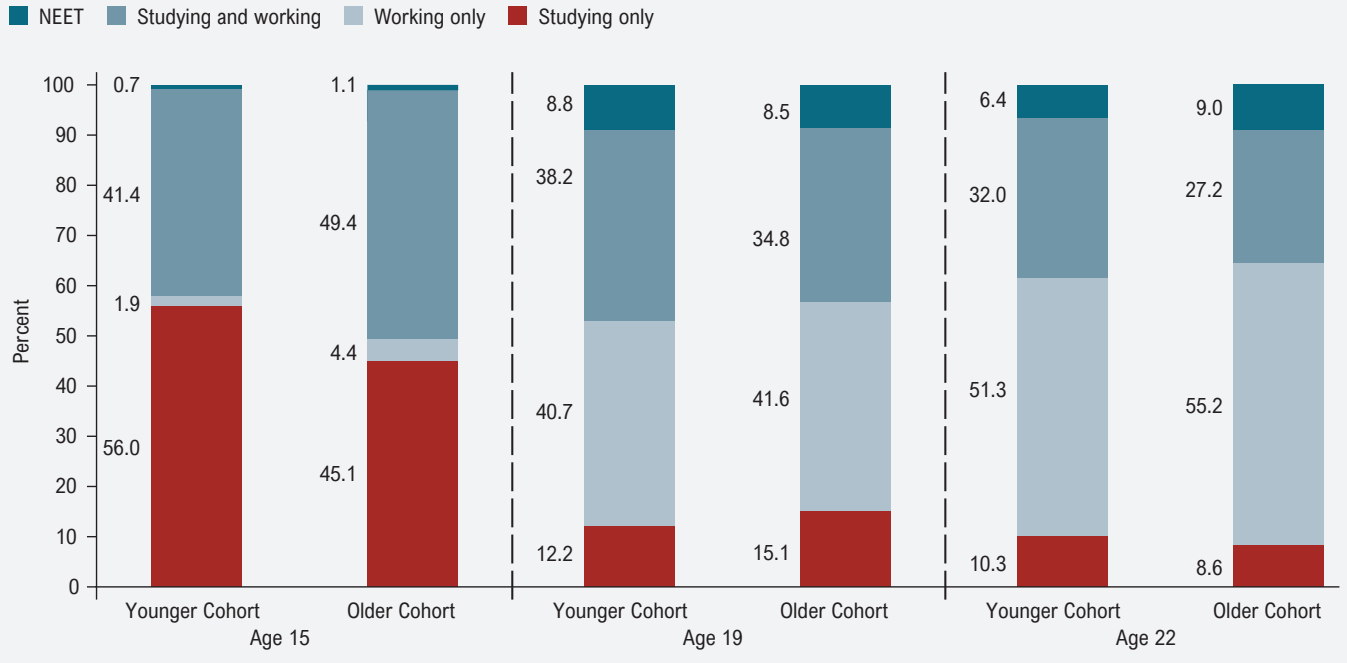
Participants who were born in poorer households and whose mothers had low levels of education were more likely to be not in employment, education or training (NEET). The prevalence of those not being in employment, education or training was higher among women (11%) compared to men (1%). The most common reasons given for not working among those not in employment, education or training were being engaged in domestic and childcare responsibilities (81%) and having a disability or being ill (15%).

Employment and types of jobs

In 2023, the proportion of young people employed in the week prior to the interview was 68% for the Younger Cohort and 84% for the Older Cohort. In the Younger Cohort, the proportion employed was higher for those from the poorest households (71%) than those from the wealthiest households (60%) (Annex 1). This difference could be because wealthier participants might not need to work at age 22, allowing them to focus on alternative activities such as studying, while the less wealthy might need an income due to their socio-economic circumstances.

Overall, the quality of jobs was low, with only one in five Younger Cohort participants employed on a written contract, and nearly one-third working more than 48 hours per week. In addition, almost half of the working Younger Cohort participants (45%) reported not being satisfied with their current job. The proportion of young people employed with a written contract was higher among those living in urban areas (24% compared to 9% in rural areas), those whose maternal language is Spanish (24% compared to 17% for those whose maternal language was an Indigenous one) and whose mother has had more education (30% compared to 19% for those whose mother had not completed primary school).

Figure 1. *Working and studying status by age and cohort (%)*



Notes: Working status is defined based on at least one hour of work in labour market activities in the last 12 months; studying status is defined based on enrolment in the ongoing academic year (for studying) prior to the interview; NEET refers to those who have not worked, are not in training and are not enrolled in education. This category also includes people who are solely engaged in unpaid care and domestic work.

Approximately four out of five young people worked in a non-agricultural sector, in both the Younger Cohort (82%) and the Older Cohort (82%) in 2023. In the Younger Cohort, only 47% of participants living in rural areas worked in a non-agricultural sector, while this increased to 89% in urban areas. For the Older Cohort, this was 59% and 89%, respectively. Being from a wealthier household, having Spanish as the maternal language and having completed more education, predicts employment in a non-agricultural sector.

Gender distribution of work

A significant gender employment gap has been persistent since participants were adolescents and widened after the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a 10-percentage point gender employment gap at age 15, that grew to 15 percentage points at age 18 and to 22 percentage points at age 22 (Figure 2a). Although the proportion of both men and women employed fell during the pandemic, the magnitude of the gender gap significantly increased during this period. The drop in employment was followed by an initial slow recovery for both women and men, but the gap further expanded thereafter with a higher recovery rate for men than women.

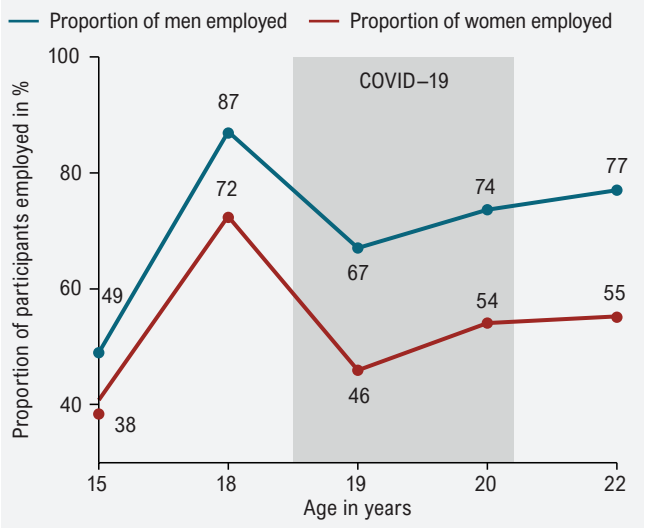
There is also a marked gender gap in time spent on paid work and unpaid care work with women spending almost three hours more than men by age 22. As early as age 15, boys were already spending an average of 18 more minutes in paid work each day than girls (Figure 2b).[2] This trend has continued, such that, by age 22, men were working about two more paid hours than women per day. In terms of time spent on unpaid care work, 15-year-old girls dedicated 12 minutes more to this per day than boys.[3] This gap has also increased with age, so that at age 22, women spent almost three hours more on unpaid care work each day than men. Overall, the evidence suggests that gender norms and social expectations play an important role in how work is divided within and outside the household.

Family formation

Young women are much more likely than young men to be married, cohabiting or have a child. Among the 22-year-old participants in 2023, 41% of Younger Cohort women were ever married or cohabiting, and 35% had a child. In contrast, only 18% of Younger Cohort men were ever married or cohabiting, and 13% had a child. These gender differences began much earlier, with women being more likely than men to marry or cohabit before the legal age (10% for women and 2% for men) or to have had a child before age 19 (23% for women and 5% for men). There are also marked differences for the prevalence of being married, cohabiting or having a child by current area of residence (53% for rural and 29% for urban). Lower mother's formal education, poorer household at birth and Indigenous maternal language are strong predictors of early marriage and parenthood. At the same time, being married, cohabiting or having a child is associated with a smaller proportion of woman being employed (65% compared to 69% for those who are not) and being less likely to be employed with a contract (16% compared to 24% for those who are not). For the latter, the difference is significant.

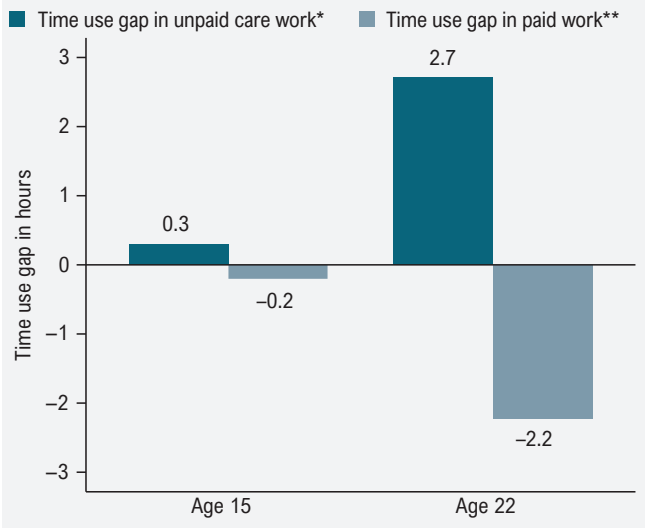
Figure 2. *Gender gaps in employment and time use*

2a. Proportion of Younger Cohort participants employed



Notes: The proportion of participants employed at age 15 and 18 refers to a recall period of last year, while the proportion of those employed at age 19, 20 and 22 refers to a recall period of the last week. The employment values presented here do not include those not working in the recall period but who have a job. This variation is due to differences in data availability.

2b. Time use of Younger Cohort participants



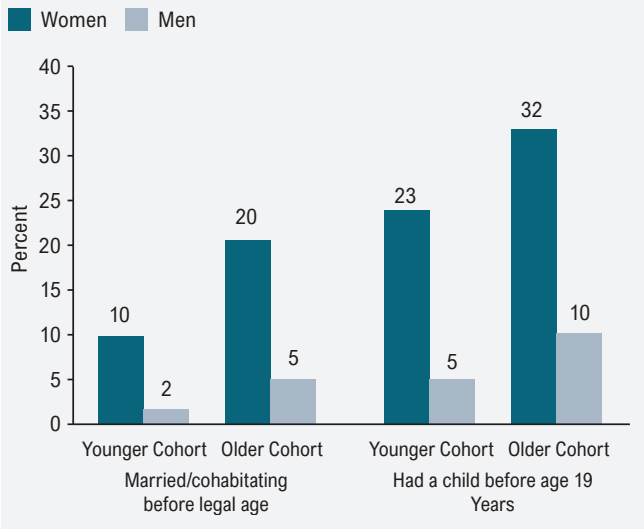
Notes: * Women's time per day in unpaid care work – men's time per day in unpaid care work; ** Women's time per day in paid work – men's time per day in paid work.

2 Paid work refers to paid (remunerated) work or activities outside of the household or for someone not in the household.

3 Unpaid care work includes direct care for elderly or ill people, people with disabilities, or children, as well as indirect care or domestic responsibilities.

The proportion of women who are married, cohabiting or have a child has decreased across cohorts. At age 22, the proportion of women married, cohabiting or having a child has reduced considerably between cohorts (52% and 44% for the Older Cohort and Younger Cohort, respectively), while among men this proportion remained similar between cohorts (22% and 20% for the Older Cohort and Younger Cohort, respectively) (Figure 3). There are similar patterns for women in both cohorts in decisions to marry or cohabit before the legal age (20% and 10% for the Older Cohort and Younger Cohort, respectively) or to have a child before the age of 19 (32% and 23% for the Older Cohort and Younger Cohort, respectively).

Figure 3. *Early marriage and parenthood status by gender and cohort (%)*



Conclusions and looking forward

Overall, the proportion of Younger Cohort participants who were studying at age 22 in 2023 is higher than the Older Cohort at the same age. For those working, the quality of jobs remains low, which is reflected in the high proportion of employed participants who did not have a written contract and who had long working hours. Future efforts should be focused on improving job quality so as to make further progress towards SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth). Interventions should protect those more affected by informal working patterns, such as younger people in rural areas and those from poorer backgrounds, who have less access to good, formal jobs.

Although the rates of early marriage and parenthood for women have reduced over time, gender inequalities remain, reflected in the gender gaps in time spent on paid work and unpaid care work. Targeted policy initiatives based on evidence, similar to the recent law to ban child marriage in Peru (Young Lives n.d.), that remove structural barriers and weaken social gendered norms are necessary to achieve SDG 5 (Gender equality).

Annex 1. *Work and family lives outcomes, Younger Cohort and Older Cohort*

	Not in employment, education or training (%)			Employed in the last week (%)		Employed in the last week with a contract (%)		Hours in unpaid care work		Married or cohabitating or has a child (%)			Married/ cohabitating before legal age (%)		Had a child before 19 years old (%)	
	OC (age 22)	OC (age 29)	YC (age 22)	OC (age 29)	YC (age 22)	OC (age 29)	YC (age 22)	OC (age 29)	YC (age 22)	OC (age 22)	OC (age 29)	YC (age 22)	OC	YC	OC	YC
Average of full sample	9.0	7.5	6.4	83.6	67.6	32.0	21.7	3.4	3.3	36.7	72.0	32.7	12.4	5.8	20.9	14.6
Gender																
Women	17.2	15.0	11.1	71.2	57.5	28.6	21.0	5.3	4.6	51.7	80.7	44.3	20.1	9.6	32.2	23.4
Men	0.8	0.1	1.3	95.7	78.5	34.5	22.2	1.4	1.8	22.0	63.5	20.1	4.9	1.6	9.9	4.9
Difference (t-test)	-16.43***	-14.89***	-9.86***	24.48***	21.01***	5.93	1.22	-3.90***	-2.75***	-29.76***	-17.27***	-24.19***	-15.16***	-7.92***	-22.31***	-18.44***
Area of residence (Round 1)																
Urban	8.9	9.4	5.6	82.0	66.0	38.3	23.6	3.4	3.0	35.2	69.0	28.0	10.9	5.9	17.5	11.7
Rural	9.0	5.1	7.8	85.4	70.3	24.7	18.6	3.4	3.7	38.4	75.6	40.8	14.3	5.6	24.9	19.4
Difference (t-test)	0.15	-4.30	2.28	3.34	4.31*	-13.54**	-4.94*	0.02	0.70***	3.14	6.56	12.84***	3.46	-0.25	7.38	7.71***
Concurrent area of residence																
Urban	7.3	7.0	5.5	85.6	66.0	34.0	24.3	3.2	3.0	36.2	68.7	28.9	12.3	5.4	18.4	12.2
Rural	14.4	8.0	11.6	76.8	75.8	22.9	9.4	3.9	4.6	40.9	81.2	53.2	14.1	7.9	30.7	27.5
Difference (t-test)	7.07	1.00	6.10**	-8.79	9.78**	-11.09	-14.92***	0.63	1.55***	4.70	12.50**	24.35***	1.78	2.19	12.27*	15.26***
Wealth index (Round 1)																
Bottom tercile	12.6	8.7	8.4	82.1	71.2	23.4	20.8	3.7	3.8	41.8	75.1	42.2	15.5	7.6	26.9	21.1
Middle tercile	7.9	6.6	5.8	83.3	69.6	34.6	20.8	3.4	3.2	36.8	75.1	30.0	11.1	4.5	16.5	11.7
Top tercile	3.0	6.4	4.1	87.0	59.8	44.7	24.7	2.5	2.6	25.0	60.0	21.5	8.1	4.6	15.3	7.9
Difference (bottom vs top tercile) (t-test)	-9.59**	-2.28	-4.26**	4.88	-11.41***	21.29***	3.98	-1.27**	-1.13***	-16.75**	-15.03**	-20.71***	-7.40	-3.01**	-11.61**	-13.19***
Maternal language																
Indigenous language	7.9	4.5	8.2	85.5	68.0	31.9	16.8	3.5	3.7	36.8	74.5	39.1	12.5	4.6	20.3	18.8
Spanish	9.5	9.6	5.5	82.0	67.5	33.1	24.0	3.2	3.1	35.5	69.1	29.7	11.7	6.4	20.4	12.4
Difference (t-test)	1.65	5.06**	-2.73*	-3.49	-0.50	1.25	7.18**	-0.32	-0.60**	-1.34	-5.38	-9.41***	-0.80	1.81	0.08	-6.36**
Maternal education																
Incomplete primary or less	11.8	6.8	7.6	82.6	70.3	26.4	19.0	3.7	3.7	39.5	76.0	41.1	15.5	6.0	22.2	20.9
Complete primary or secondary	6.6	7.7	6.2	86.2	69.8	37.2	22.6	2.8	3.1	35.4	70.3	31.3	9.2	6.5	19.6	11.8
Higher education	0.0	4.8	3.1	74.6	51.7	64.0	29.6	2.4	2.3	13.2	46.5	9.5	2.4	1.9	8.3	3.4
Difference (t-test)	-11.79***	-2.02	-4.57**	-7.99	-18.58***	37.61***	10.58**	-1.29**	-1.46***	-26.26***	-29.48**	-31.64***	-13.06***	-4.17**	-13.97**	-17.53***
Number of participants	498	517	1701	517	1702	437	1149	497	1682	515	517	1701	517	1702	517	1702

Notes: Differences are significant at ***1%, **5% and *10%. Differences are percentage points. Information on maternal education and language was taken from 2006 (Round 2). Area of residence refers to the household location in 2002 (Round 1) as well as 2023 (Round 7). Household wealth terciles were calculated separately for each cohort using the household wealth index of 2002 (Round 1). The t-test for household wealth was estimated by comparing bottom with top tercile, while the t-test for mothers' years of formal education was estimated by comparing incomplete primary education or no education with higher education. Eight participants have missing information of the wealth index in Round 1; 35 participants have missing information for mother's level of education in Round 2; 16 participants have information missing for current area of location.

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Young Lives is a longitudinal study of poverty and inequality, following the lives of 12,000 children into adulthood in four countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam).

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