



Dropout Rates in Argentina: Causes and Solution

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Abstract

Argentina has one of the best K-12 education systems in Latin America, both compulsory and free. However, there is a significant dropout rate at the upper secondary education level with a relatively low learning outcome, which could lead to less earning and informal sector employment, harming the country's economy in the long run. In the study, we explore the potential causes of dropout from the demand side, such as poverty, and the supply side, such as inefficient use of educational spending, a decentralized educational system, a lack of vocational education, and outdated curricula. In addition, we discussed fieldwork lessons learned and studied the outcomes of government and private organizational initiatives to ameliorate the situation while implementing programs and policies.

Aim of the Study

We emphasized the educational system in Argentina and studied the aspects that contribute to the secondary education dropout rate and low learning outcomes while exploring the results of various government and private organizations' efforts to address the problem through policies and initiatives.

Problems and challenges

Lack of examination is causing a loss in motivation and the goal of the study: Promotion is determined by school evaluation; there are no external graduation exams. Entrance examinations for public tertiary education institutions are excluded as a part of the admission process.

Poverty and income disparity affects educational outcomes:

Adolescents who are burdened by work are more prone to relapse and drop out. (MoE, 2019) Being in the fourth income quintile increases the likelihood of going to school by about 10%. 2014's (Cruces et al.) An individual between the ages of 18 and 26 who lives in a home with more than two people per bedroom has an average 33.2% lower chance of completing secondary education than an individual who lives in a home with two or fewer people per bedroom, which lowers the likelihood of remaining in school by 11% to 13%. (Lanus, 2009)

Poor quality of curriculums leads to low math and science learning outcomes and a disconnect between school education and the demand of labor market.

Decentralization of education to provincial levels was a self-centered government action in the 1980s and 1990s.

Job stability and decentralization: between 1890-93 there were 76 ministers of education in Argentina. (Hanson, E. M. 1998).

Argentina experienced approximately 1500 teacher strikes during 1983-2014: Which aggregated annual earnings loss of \$2.34 billion. (Jaume, D., & Willén, A. 2019)

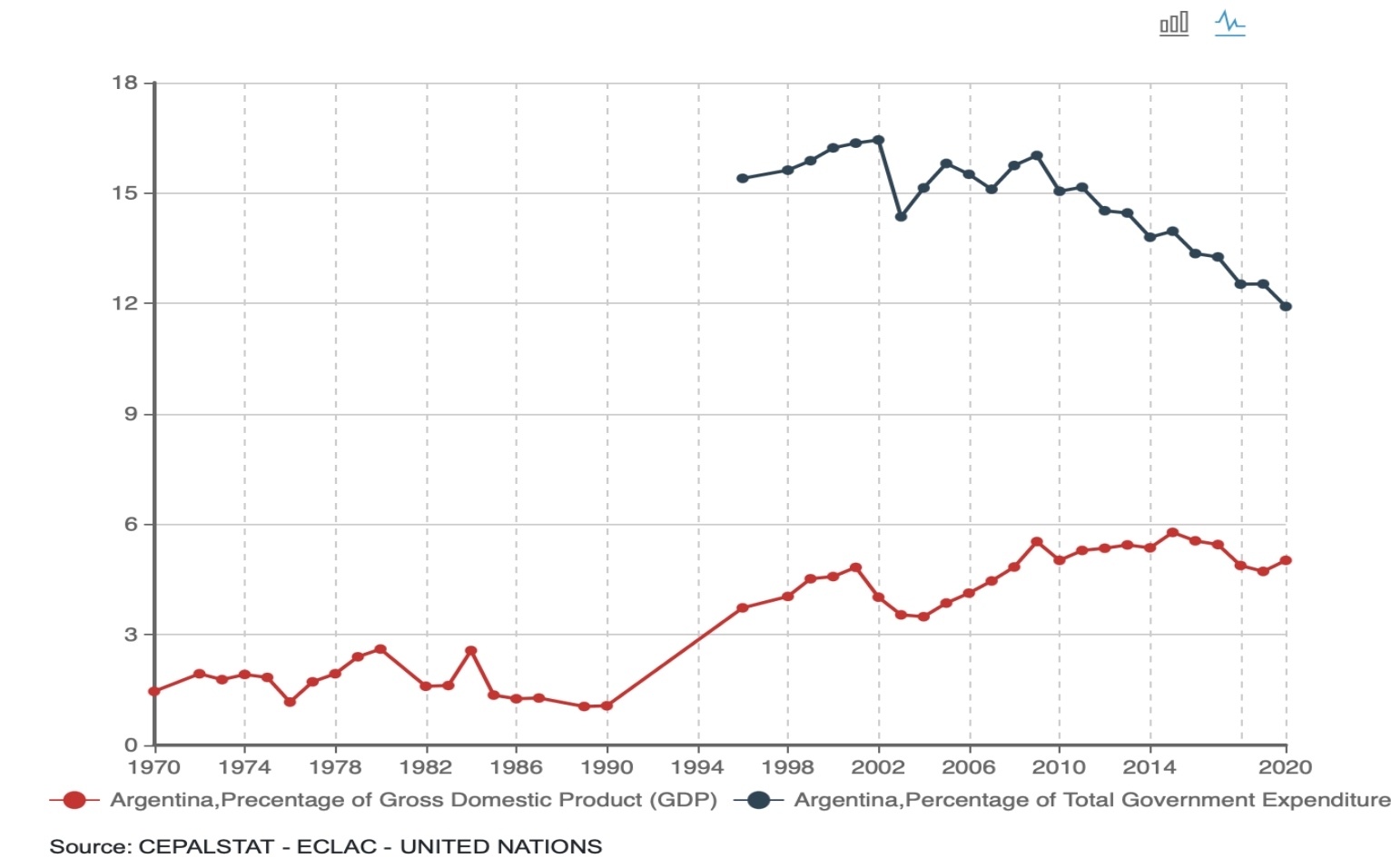
Deficits in support equipment and educational supplies for students with disabilities and from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups incorporated into general education.

Education System in Argentina

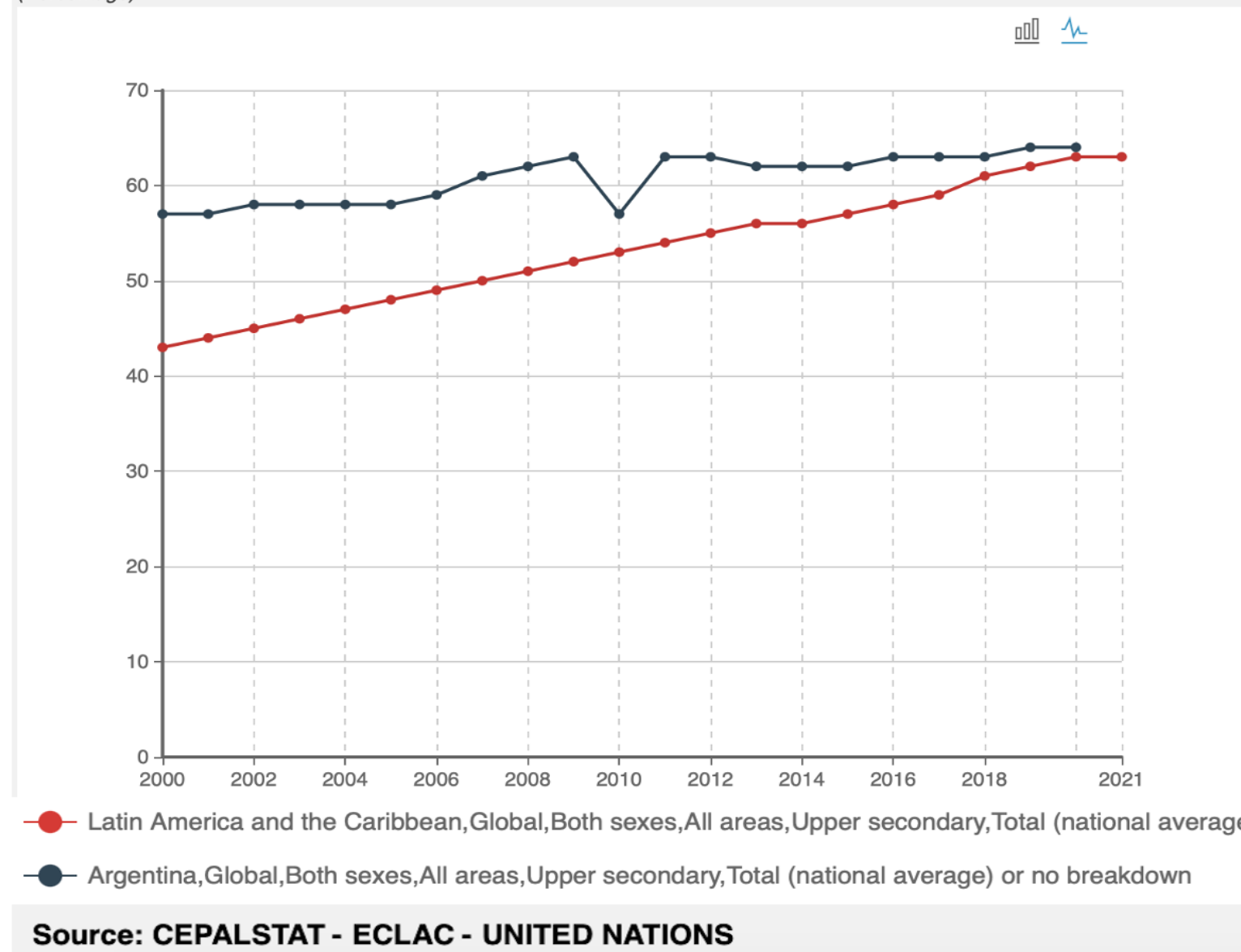
Education	School/Level	Grades	Age	Years	Notes
Primary	Primary Education	1-6	6-11	6-7	Primary Education: EGB1 and EGB2 Compulsory Education: One year of Pre-primary plus 9 years of basic education. Three three-year cycles: EGB1, EGB2 and EGB3
Middle	Lower Secondary	7-9	12-14	2-3	Lower Secondary: EGB3
Secondary	Upper-Secondary (Polimodal)	10-12	15-17	3	Upper-Secondary (Polimodal)
Post-secondary	Post-Secondary			1-4	
Tertiary	Bachelor			4-5	Licenciatura (Licentiate Degree), Bachiller Superior, Bachillerato de Bellas Artes, Título de Ingeniero
Tertiary	Master			1-3	Maestría
Tertiary	Doctorate			3	

Ministry of National Education Argentina

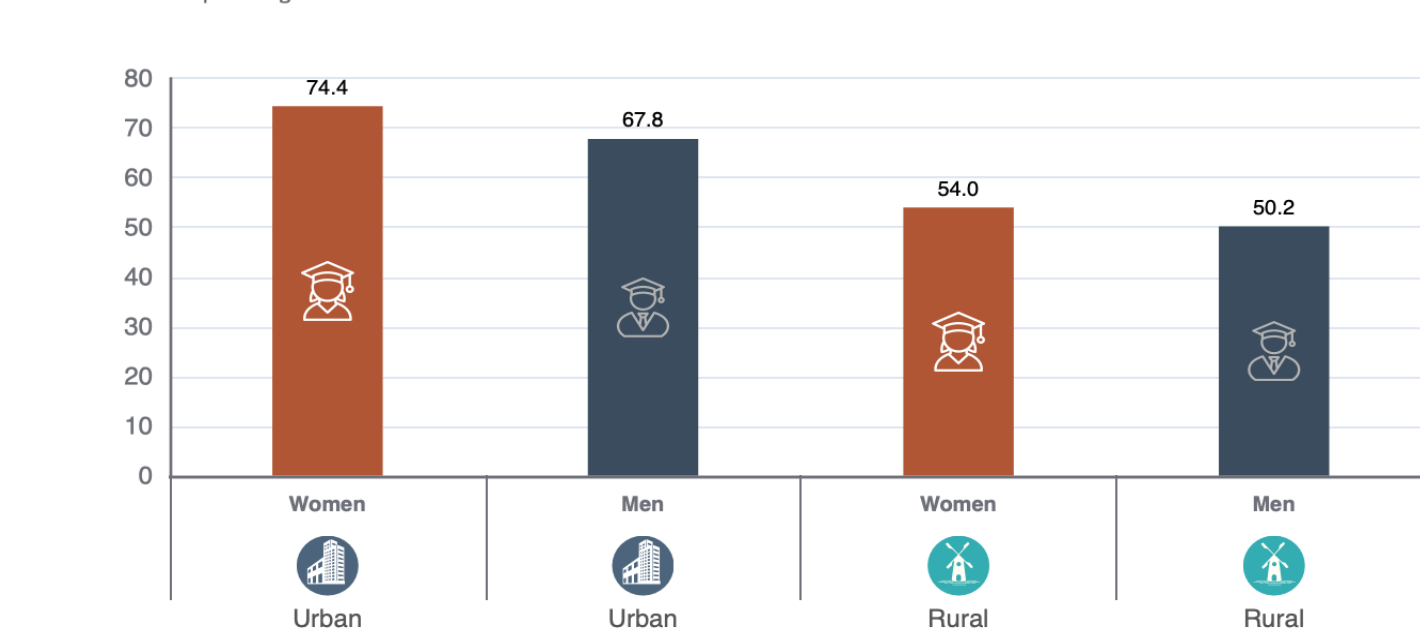
Demographic and social / Social / Education
Public expenditure on education
(Percentage)



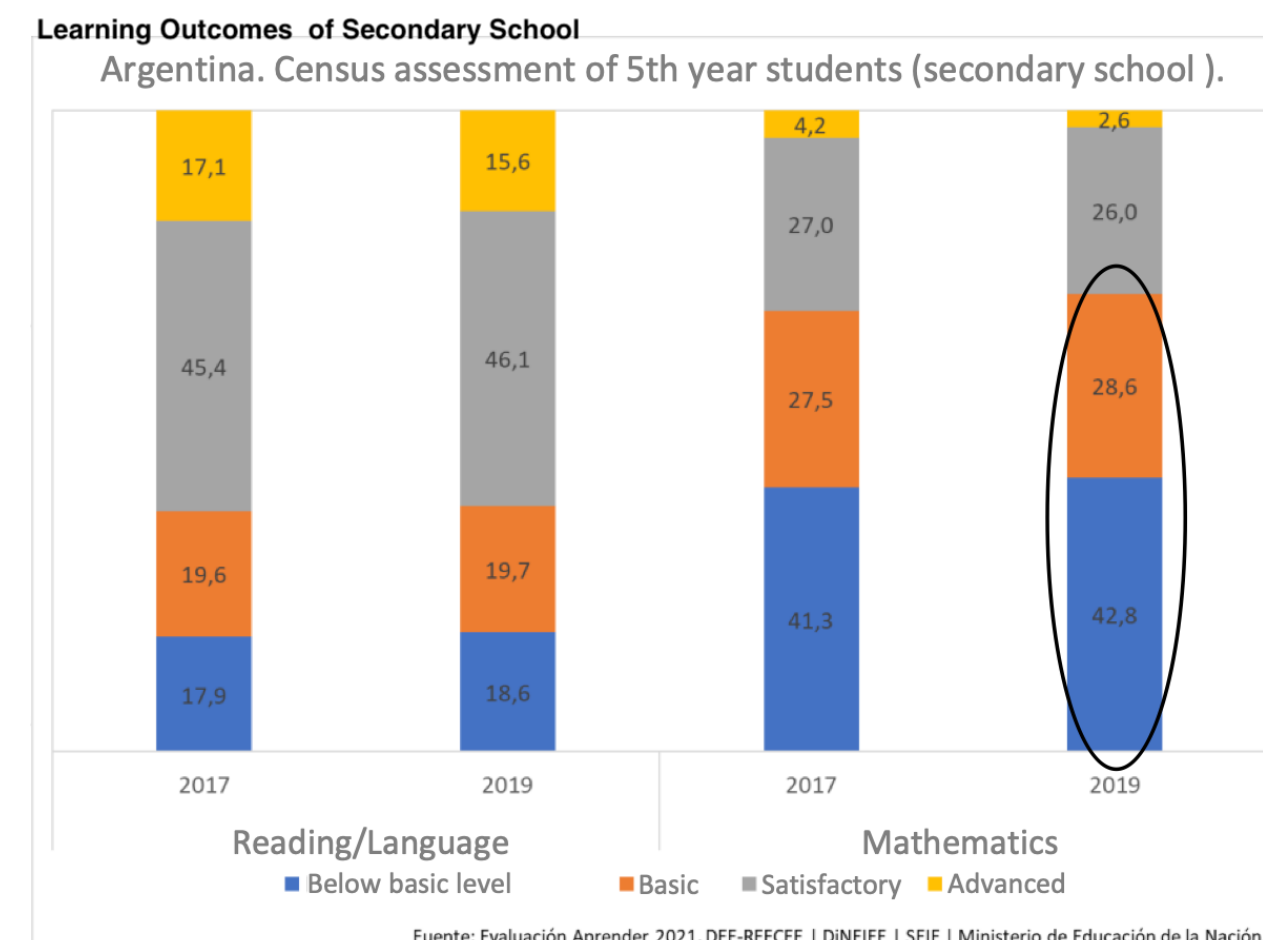
Completion rate, by sex, location, wealth quintile and education level (%) SE_TOT_CPLR
(Percentage)



Persons who completed secondary education according to geographic area of residence, by sex
(Percentage)
Latin America (simple average) 2021



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CEPALSTAT, based on Household Surveys Databank (HADES-HOG).
Last update: 12/15/2022



Share of public spending in education in GDP

	1990	1995	2000	2010
Argentina	3.6	4.2	5.1	5.3
Bolivia	3.4	5.5	5.8	6.3
Brazil	3.4	5.1	5.0	5.6
Chile	2.3	2.6	3.9	4.1
Colombia	2.4	3.0	3.3	3.0
Costa Rica	3.9	4.2	5.1	5.9
Dominican R.	0.9	1.6	2.5	2.3
Ecuador	2.8	2.6	2.1	2.6
El Salvador	1.9	2.0	3.4	3.1
Guatemala	1.8	1.9	2.9	3.0
Honduras	4.3	3.7	6.2	7.6
Mexico	2.6	3.9	3.9	4.1
Nicaragua	2.6	2.8	3.7	5.5
Panama	3.6	3.5	4.2	4.0
Paraguay	1.3	3.6	4.3	4.1
Peru	1.6	2.7	2.8	2.6
Uruguay	2.5	2.5	3.0	4.3
Venezuela	3.5	3.8	5.1	5.5
Average *	2.8	3.3	4.0	4.4

Source: CEPAL, Anuario Estadístico de América Latina y el Caribe, various issues.
* To compute the LA average we estimate missing observations using information from close years.

Change in net enrollment rates and gap Q5-Q1 by decades
Secondary

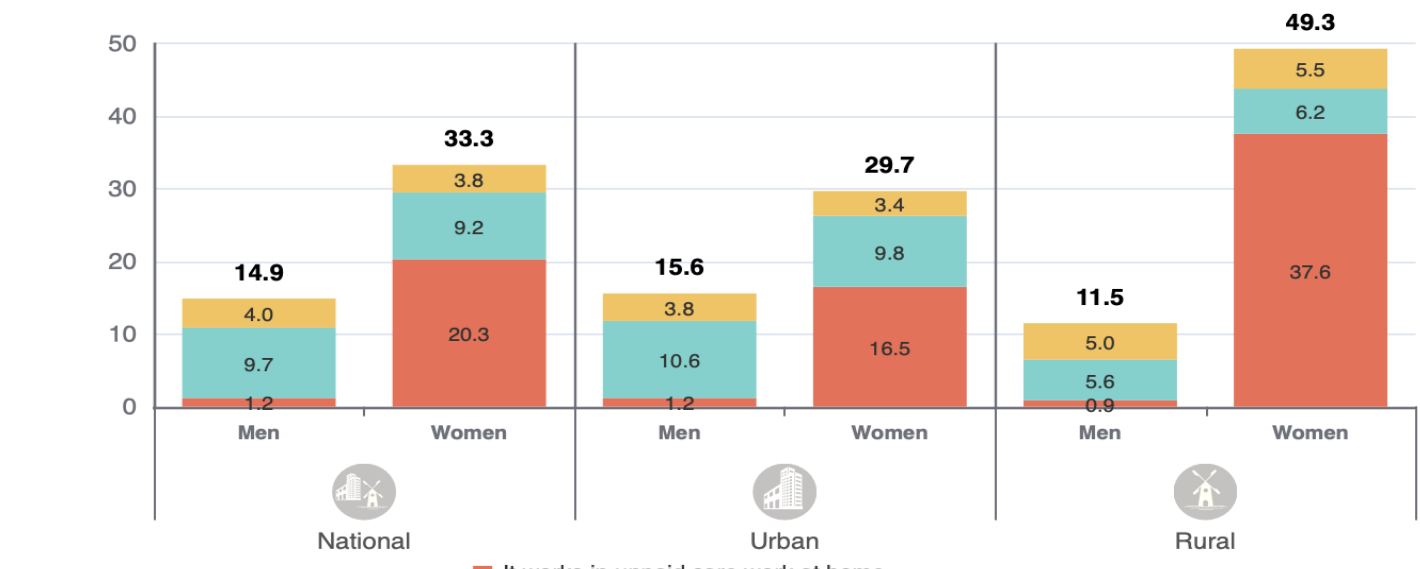
	Change in enrollment			Change in gap Q5-Q1		
	1990s	2000s	All	1990s	2000s	All
Argentina	16.9	8.3	25.2	-4.6	-12.7	-17.4
Bolivia	9.0	8.8	17.9	18.5	-17.4	1.1
Brazil	16.3	21.2	37.5	16.5	-14.3	2.2
Chile	10.9	7.4	18.2	-3.8	-14.0	-17.9
Costa Rica	7.6	23.6	31.2	2.0	-8.0	-6.0
El Salvador	9.0	9.7	18.6	9.4	3.3	12.7
Honduras	12.4	7.7	20.1	13.3	-5.6	7.7
Mexico	15.3	6.8	22.1	-13.2	-17.0	-30.1
Nicaragua	12.4	3.2	15.5	3.1	14.6	17.7
Panama	4.8	9.9	14.6	-2.4	-20.5	-22.9
Uruguay	6.5	1.1	7.6	-7.3	2.0	-5.3
Venezuela	1.5	10.4	12.0	0.3	-6.6	-6.3
Average	10.2	9.8	20.1	2.6	-8.0	-5.4

Tertiary

	Change in enrollment			Change in gap Q5-Q1		
	1990s	2000s	All	1990s	2000s	All
Argentina	4.7	5.7	10.4	21.5	1.5	23.0
Bolivia	2.1	2.7	4.9	9.3	11.0	20.3
Brazil	3.5	7.2	10.7	15.5	11.3	26.9
Chile	9.9	3.3	13.2	14.8	-10.8	3.9
Costa Rica	2.2	7.0	9.2	6.1	19.4	25.4
El Salvador	5.7	0.8	6.5	15.1	2.7	17.8
Honduras	2.8	1.2	4.0	14.8	3.3	18.1
Mexico	6.4	4.2	10.6	10.7	-7.4	3.3
Nicaragua	6.4	-0.3	6.1	18.1	-0.1	18.1
Panama	4.1	2.0	6.1	7.9	-1.6	6.2
Uruguay	7.3	2.0	9.4	23.4	6.5	30.0
Venezuela	4.5	9.0	13.5	9.3	3.3	12.6
Average	5.0	3.7	8.7	13.9	3.3	17.1

Source: own calculations based on SEDLAC (CEDLAS and World Bank).

Young people between 20 and 24 years old who do not study or work and reason why they do not study or work, according to geographical area, by sex
(Percentage)
Latin America (weighted average) 2021



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CEPALSTAT, based on Household Surveys Databank (HADES-HOG).
Last update: 12/15/2022

Efforts by Government and others

Because Argentina's education system is decentralized, each province follows its own rules and regulations rather than directly following the Ministry of Education's direction, making it difficult to measure the impact of program improvements and progress. Therefore, we investigated new and old programs and policies that may have an immediate impact on the outcome of system improvement.

- Conditional Cash Transfer programs: Asignación Universal por Hijo (Universal Child Allowance, AUH).
- Complementary vocational education.
- Una hora mas.
- Curricular reformation, Secondary 2030, Improving Science and Math Learning in Argentina.
- PROMEDU (2007-2019) is a program to support a policy on improving equity in education.

Field learning and Conclusion

Despite legislative attempts, there was no or little impact on dropout rates and educational quality, and educational disparity still exists. This leaves room for other attempts to reduce inequality, including:

- More investment in teacher training or financial incentives for parents.
- Improve the targeting strategies, conditionality, and transfer mechanism for the CCT program AUH.
- Collaboration with non-governmental organizations to provide students in secondary schools with an appropriate level of skill development to complete their education.
- Impact evaluation should be carried out to improve the policies or project outcomes while collaborating with the IDB and other private organizations.
- With an unstable government and short-term policy pledges, prospective outcomes may never be observed in the long run.

References and Acknowledgement

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