



The Aging Readiness & Competitiveness Report

MEXICO

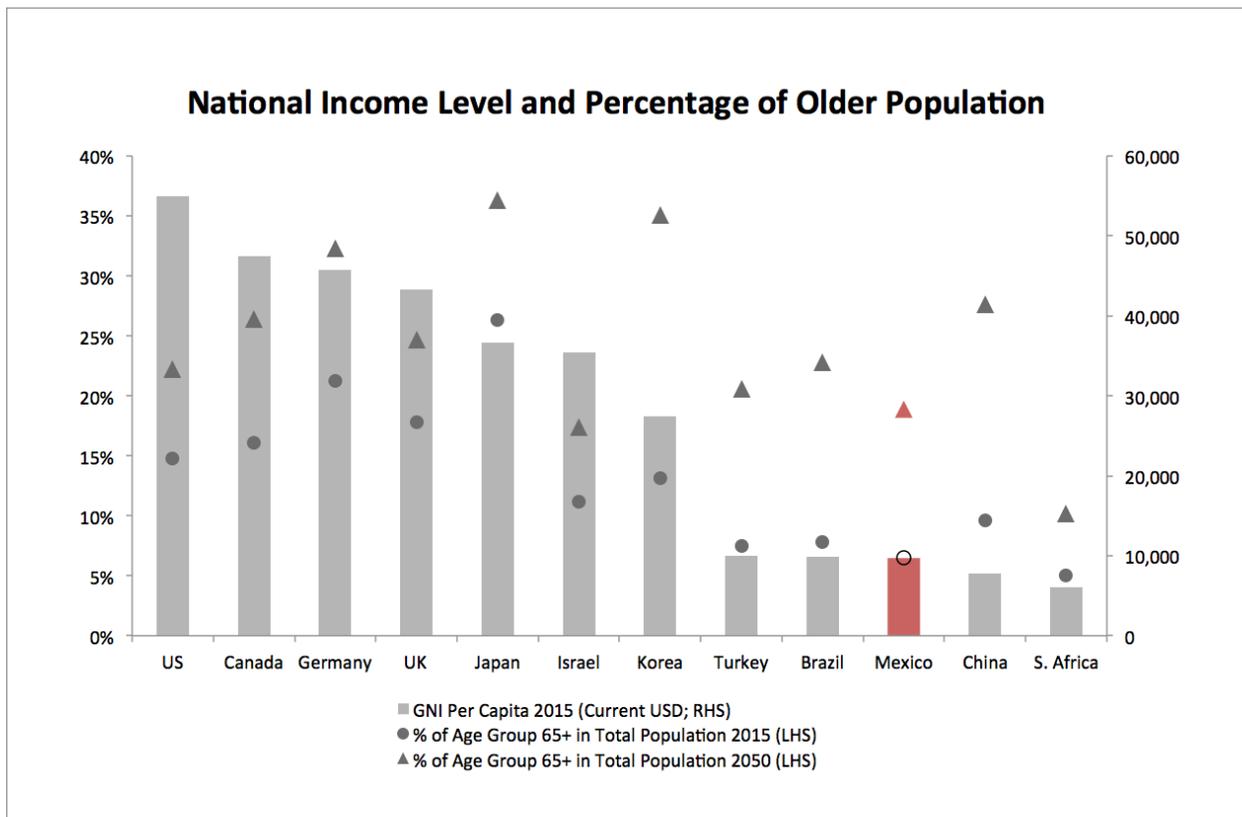
Overview

Mexico is on the verge of a demographic sea change. Today, it remains a relatively young population, with only 8.2 million people, or 6.5 percent, age 65 and over as of 2015 – the second lowest rate among countries covered in this study, after South Africa. However, by 2050, the size of this population group is projected to grow by 277 percent to over 30 million people, or 18.9 percent of the population. This level of growth can be compared with the growth rate of 194 percent for upper-middle-

income countries and just 71 percent for high-income countries.¹

The reason for population aging in Mexico is closely related to its declining fertility rate. From 2000 through 2015, Mexico's fertility rate fell from 2.6 children per woman to 2.3 children per woman, and it is projected to decline further to 1.7 percent by 2050. More developed regions experienced an opposing trend, where

¹ UN Population Projections 2015.



(Sources: United Nations, World Bank, OECD)

fertility rates increased slightly from 2000 through 2015, from 1.6 to 1.7 children per woman. Those rates are projected to inch up slightly to 1.8 children per woman by 2050.²³

Older Mexican adults have both poverty and labor force-participation rates among the highest of OECD countries, partly attributed to the country's massive informal economy. Informal sectors employ almost 60 percent of Mexico's labor force, who often have to work at low-income jobs throughout their working lives and are vulnerable to poverty during those years as well as in old age. As a result, older Mexicans tend to work late into their lives and have the third highest labor force participation among OECD countries after Iceland and South Korea. Despite the high economic participation, low education attainment and a lack of skills among older adults have limited their ability to earn sufficient income.

Reducing labor informality has been a priority of President Peña Nieto's administration, which has taken multiple actions, including building a new tax regime for small businesses, to help transition informal jobs to the formal sector. Successfully reducing informality would help to improve the quality of the

job opportunities that currently exist for older adults and would ensure that those active in the labor force receive a fair wage. However, the government is not currently focused on implementing policies that would improve productive opportunity among the older-age labor force through support of job-skills training.

While the healthy lifespan of older adults increased in all other countries observed for this study, older Mexican adults' average healthy life expectancy has actually declined over the past decade. Limited access to nutrition resources and unhealthy dietary styles, due to high poverty, have led to increasing chronic diseases like diabetes among older Mexican adults, which in turn create further financial problems as a result of high out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare.

Recognizing that aging is a looming issue, the government has begun to establish community-support infrastructure for older adults through its National Institute of Older Persons as well as long-term care infrastructure through the recently established National Institute of Geriatrics. However, the development of these initiatives is proceeding slowly, due to their low level of priority on the government's policy agenda and a lack of resources afforded to the individual institutions.

² Ibid.

³ The UN defines "More developed regions" as Europe, North America, Australia/New Zealand, and Japan.



Community Social Infrastructure

While migration among younger people has led to changing family dynamics, the traditional multigenerational family structure has remained strong, and Mexico still has the largest household size among all OECD countries – an average of nearly four members as of 2015.⁴ Outside of families, however, community support infrastructure is minimal. The Mexican government has established an institution specifically dedicated to the aging population and has given it the responsibility of devising methods for implementing community-based support policies for older adults. While the government has established programs that help older adults access transportation, food, and other basic services in urban areas, caregiving and support services for older adults are in short supply, and neither government nor NGOs have taken significant steps to provide community support for older adults nationwide.

Social Connections

The traditional structure of Mexican households has always been multigenerational, although it is slowly shifting away from the traditional model in recent years. This can be attributed to the impact of youth migration, both internally from rural to urban areas and externally to

⁴ http://www.oecd.org/els/family/SF_1_1_Family_size_and_composition.pdf.

“We always talk about the role of older people in the family, but this applies to society as well. Volunteering can help older adults find meaning within society. We need to change the culture to encourage and dignify volunteer work as a way of helping older adults feel like they still belong.”

- Rebeca Wong, Director of the WHO/PAHO Collaborating Center on Aging and Health at the University of Texas Medical Branch

the United States.⁵ As of 2012, more than 40 percent of older adults age 60 and over lived in extended households with children and grandchildren, around five percentage points lower than 2009.⁶ This shift is expected to continue as traditional family and gender roles continue to evolve.⁷

Although slow, the shift in family structure is occurring simultaneously along with population aging, different from the general path of developed countries where the family structure shift preceded the population aging.⁸ As a result, the country

⁵ <http://redfame.com/journal/index.php/ijsss/article/viewFile/453/415>.

⁶ <http://www.inegi.org.mx/saladeprensa/aproposito/2014/adultos0.pdf>.

⁷ Interview with Rebeca Wong, Director, WHO/PAHO Collaborating Center on Aging and Health, University of Texas Medical Branch.

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2917107/>.

has less time to develop the necessary infrastructure for providing older adults with structures to support active and healthy aging that many may be less likely to receive from family members. Today, outside of family and church communities, opportunities for older adults to become more involved in their respective neighborhood environments are very limited.⁹ According to Rebeca Wong, Director of the WHO/PAHO Collaborating Center on Aging and Health at the University of Texas Medical Branch, “We always talk about the role of older people in the family, but this applies to society as well. Volunteering can help older adults find meaning within society. We need to change the culture to encourage and dignify volunteer work as a way of helping older adults feel like they still belong.”

Physical Infrastructure

There is virtually no infrastructure in place to ensure that the physical environment accommodates older adults, with the exception of the country’s most urban areas. Mexico’s low tax-to-GDP ratio of just 17.4 percent in 2015, compared to the OECD average of 34.3 percent,¹⁰ has made developing building and transportation infrastructure difficult,¹¹ particularly in rural areas where over a quarter of older adults reside.¹² While the government did initiate a National Infrastructure Program in 2014

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <https://www.oecd.org/tax/revenue-statistics-mexico.pdf>.

¹¹ <http://www.cfr.org/mexico/mexico-development-democracy-crossroads/p24089>.

¹² http://www.inegi.org.mx/saladeprensa/boletines/2016/especiales/especiales2016_06_05.pdf.

to be completed by 2018, it has faced budgetary constraints, and age-friendly requirements are not included in the plan.¹³

Even in urban areas like Mexico City, where local governments have started to pay attention to older people’s needs, there is tremendous room for further improvement. Mexico City offers free metro service to older adults,¹⁴ but a lack of accessibility to metro stations has prevented them from taking advantage of it. Metro stations in the city often do not have elevators, and those that have been installed in some stations typically cannot be accessed without a medical certificate.¹⁵ Around Mexico City, there are also a number of factors in the physical/built environment that discourage older adult participation in day-to-day activities. Busy streets and numerous street vendors make walking on the sidewalk difficult for older adults, forcing them to walk in street traffic. In addition, much of the pavement is uneven and cracked, which creates a significant safety hazard.¹⁶

Some local governments, specifically those in Mexico City and Jalisco, have worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) in an attempt to promote age-friendly practices that relate largely to housing, transportation, and the physical environment, but have not established specific policies to help implement these ideas. Currently, 1 percent of all houses

¹³ <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Mexico-Infrastructure-Program>.

¹⁴ <https://www.mexicocity.com/v/city-info/>.

¹⁵ <https://helpage.exposure.co/life-for-older-people-in-mexico-city>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

built in Mexico City are required by law to be suitable for older adults.¹⁷ A WHO project consultation led older adults and other citizens to push for a “clean street” campaign, a provision of adapted buses specifically for disabled older adults and their caregivers, and better supervision over housing construction so that all housing is structurally sound, but the results of many of these efforts have yielded little to no implementation of specific policies.¹⁸

The state of Jalisco worked to ensure that Guadalajara, the municipality with the highest rate of population aging across the entire state, received consultation from the WHO in 2014 on how to embrace age-friendly practices that involved listening to the voices of older adults through focus groups, surveys, virtual social networks, and events in public spaces in the city, though similarly to Mexico City, there is no evidence of directly connected results.¹⁹ While not related to the physical environment, however, as of April 2017, the state has funded a program offering volunteer opportunities as a means of creating spaces where older people feel valued.²⁰

Lack of Community Support Services for Older Adults

There is a lack of effective infrastructure in place for providing community support services to older adults. Since 2002,

¹⁷ http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf?ua=1.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/network/guadalajara-mexico/>.

²⁰ <https://programas.app.jalisco.gob.mx/programas/reporte/fichaBasica/572>.

the major pioneer toward ensuring that sufficient community support services are available to older people has been the National Institute for Older Persons (INAPAM), though it can be effective only on a small scale, due to its limited amount of resources and government funding. Unlike in other middle-income countries where gaps in government support are supplemented by NGO efforts, in Mexico there are very few local NGOs working to provide assistance to older adults hoping to remain in their homes and involved within their communities for as long as possible. This reflects a broader structural gap in the system to encourage and regulate the formation of NGOs, or to require that they register with the government. There is no legislation in place to provide guidance for how NGOs are meant to conduct their operations, and therefore local organizations that provide community support for older adults are in extremely short supply.²¹

The establishment of INAPAM as an institution was an attempt to establish a nationwide discourse that prioritizes the needs of older adults, ensures that support services were in place in accordance with the Older Persons’ Rights Law (Ley de los Derechos de las Personas Adultas) of 2002, and follows the example of Mexico City, which already had policies protecting the rights of older adults before the federal government implemented its own.²² INAPAM is charged with the responsibility of creating programs to assist older adults and prepare for population aging. However,

²¹ Interview with Mariana Lopez Ortega, Investigator at INGER, February 2017.

²² Ibid.

“INAPAM tends to be limited to Mexico City because they are forced to operate with a very small budget. The group also lacks the political influence to exercise any real power over changing this, despite being assigned the responsibility of developing policies to prepare for nationwide population aging.”

– Luis Miguel Gutiérrez Robledo,
Director of the National Institute of
Geriatrics (INGER)

according to Luis Miguel Gutiérrez Robledo of Mexico’s National Institute of Geriatrics, “INAPAM tends to be limited to Mexico City because they are forced to operate with a very small budget. The group also lacks the political influence to exercise any real power over changing this, despite being assigned the responsibility of developing policies to prepare for nationwide population aging.”

One of INAPAM’s most popular services is a discount program available to all Mexicans age 60 and older, which allows older adults to enjoy savings of between 10 and 50 percent on a number of goods and services aimed at making living within their communities easier. To obtain access to this discount service, older adults need only apply to receive the INAPAM card, which is accepted at a variety of service providers, including bus companies, taxi firms, local food and convenience stores, and other private businesses like car service shops, clothing stores, and

computer/tech shops. In total, there are over 15,000 establishments participating in this program in Mexico. INAPAM also offers psychological services for older adults who are hoping to avoid or cope with social exclusion, as well as career-placement services, cultural centers, and day residences.²³ However, there has been very little growth in terms of the scope of its programs, and local experts do not feel that the institution will be able to further develop social services on anything other than a small scale as it depends on both the infrastructure and resources of other institutions to function.²⁴

While INAPAM is intended to serve older adults nationwide, the government has only provided it with enough resources and funding to service older adults, largely in Mexico City and other urban areas. While this is significant, considering that 74 percent of adults age 60 and older in Mexico are living in urban areas,²⁵ and experts agree that INAPAM has been effective in assisting older adults in these urban areas²⁶ (primarily through its discount program), its reach is still not expansive enough for its existing programs to significantly benefit Mexico’s older adults in rural communities.

²³ <https://www.oecd.org/mexico/47877877.pdf>.

²⁴ Interview with Luis Miguel Gutierrez Robledo, Director, INGER, August 2016.

²⁵ <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13670-012-0028-z>.

²⁶ Interview with Luis Miguel Gutierrez Robledo, Director, INGER, August 2016.

Productive Opportunity

Older adults in Mexico work longer, on average, than their peers in most other OECD countries. The country's enormous informal sector has left the majority of informal workers without access to retirement benefits or well-paying employment opportunities later in life. Informal and self-employed workers make up 60 percent of the labor force, but this informal sector only accounts for 26 percent of the country's GDP.²⁷ The government has not been able to tap into the productive potential of its older adult population, as it has focused on mitigating

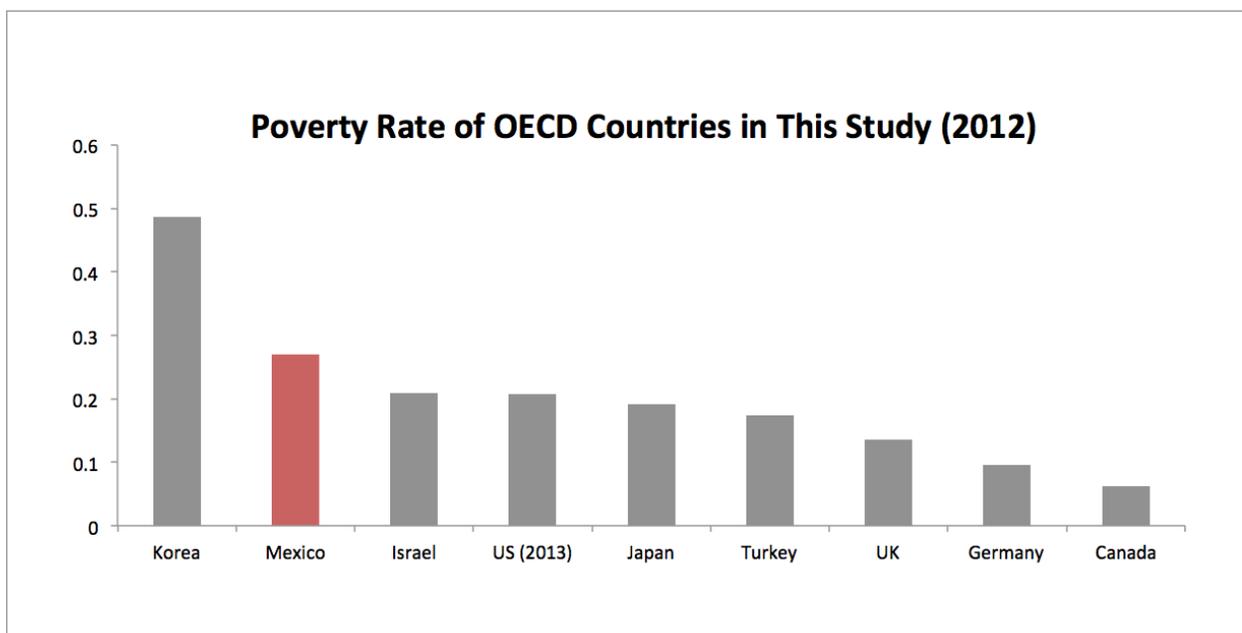
²⁷ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/05/top-10-things-to-know-about-the-mexican-economy/>.

older adults' poverty through its non-contributory pension scheme.

Labor Participation of Older Adults

Mexico has the third highest labor force-participation rate of older adults among OECD countries, and like Korea, which leads in older adult labor force participation, long working lives are driven by a high rate of poverty. The labor force-participation rate for people age 65 and older was 27.7 percent in Mexico in 2015, nearly double the OECD average.²⁸ While employers within the formal sector

²⁸ https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=LFS_SEXAGE_I_R#.



(Source: OECD)

contribute to employees' social security retirement accounts, informal employers do not. Therefore, even the informally employed who do have a social security account they contribute to will not be able to accumulate as much savings as formal-sector workers. Furthermore, job opportunities in the informal economy offer virtually no opportunity for the development of skills that would allow individuals to break out into the formal sector as they age, limiting them to the low earnings of the informal sector. As a result, older Mexican adults had the third highest poverty rate among OECD countries at 26 percent as of 2014.²⁹

Despite the desire to work, older adults seeking employment in Mexico face rampant ageism among employers. A local organization called the Association for Labor Discrimination by Age or Gender reports that age discrimination limiting productive opportunity often begins to face people as young as 35, and that old-age discrimination with respect to employment has become much more acute in the past 30 years.³⁰ While Mexico's Federal Labor Law of 2012 prohibits discrimination on the basis of age,³¹ the director of complaints at Mexico's National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination (CONAPRED) acknowledged a general failure to enforce

²⁹ OECD Statistics.

³⁰ <http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/archivo/empresas-cierran-puertas-a-personas-de-35-anos.html>.

³¹ <http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/economia/limitar-la-edad-tambien-es-discriminacion-laboral.html>.

anti-discrimination laws that pertain to older adults. This lax attitude toward ensuring that older people are treated fairly has come from the fact that Mexico's population is so young, which has made the issue of ageism less of a priority.³² According to a local advocacy group called Mexico's Center for Labor Reflection and Action, companies tend to hire younger workers because they have fewer family responsibilities and can live on less income, making it even more difficult for older applicants to compete against younger ones.³³

Policy Actions

The government's reaction has focused on mitigating poverty rather than enabling new skills development. A means-tested Pension for Older Adults was introduced in 2007 and further increased its coverage in 2013 by lowering the eligibility age for men from 70 to 65. As people working in the informal sector tend not to make social security contributions, they do not receive any pension through social security when they pass the normal retirement age at 65 and can only benefit from this non-contributory pension scheme,³⁴ which pays a fraction (less than 5 percent) of the average monthly household income.³⁵

³² <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/story?id=3641173&page=1>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ The non-contributory pension scheme targets individuals who have reached the age of 65 and do not have a pension from a social security institute.

³⁵ <http://www.efe.com/efe/english/life/mexican-households-have-an-average-of-3-8-members-843-in-monthly-income/50000263-2666718>.

Since 2013, it has provided financial incentives to encourage informal workers' contribution to their social security and retirement accounts, helping them to prepare financially for retirement.

While the lack of skills and education prevents older workers from participating in the formal sector, policy support for training and employability is scarce. Although the National Institute for the Elderly (INAPAM) does provide training, and career placement fairs specifically cater to older adults around the country,³⁶ along with the rest of INAPAM services, these are much more accessible to older adults in urban areas, particularly Mexico City, than they are to those in rural areas.³⁷ In 2016, INAPAM worked with 32 companies in Mexico to support inclusivity in hiring processes and to carry out training programs to provide jobs for older people who hope to remain active in the labor force.³⁸

Local governments in large cities have also made an effort to provide education and training to older adults to help improve their productive skills. The most prominent example is Universidad de la Tercera Edad, a university exclusively for older adults, established by the government

of Mexico City in 2009.³⁹ The university offers degrees in psychology and business administration, and its students only pay the equivalent of roughly 70 pesos to 335 pesos (approximately USD 3.75 to USD 18.00) per class, compared to over 18,000 pesos (approximately USD 1,000) per class at other universities in Mexico, with an average enrollment cost of USD 5,000 per year at public universities.

The university offers courses in other subjects, including computer science, law, English, history, and philosophy. In 2013, the university lowered the minimum age requirement for enrollment from 60 to 55, and it has since lowered it to 50. It has produced more than 3,500 alumni, but despite the success of the program, there is no evidence that other organizations or local governments have made efforts to establish similar institutions for older people.⁴⁰

Recent Initiative to Formalize Employment

As a key component of his economic development plan to realize Mexico's full potential and to boost economic growth, President Peña Nieto has focused on reducing labor informality since the

³⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/mexico/47877877.pdf>.

³⁷ Interview with Luis Miguel Gutierrez Robledo, Director, INGER, August 2016.

³⁸ <https://www.gob.mx/inapam/prensa/en-el-mercado-laboral-los-adultos-mayores-hacen-la-diferencia?idiom=es>.

³⁹ http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2009-09-28-mexico-aging-senior-citizens_N.htm.

⁴⁰ Interview with Roberto Ham Chande, Research Professor at El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF).

beginning of his administration. In 2013, the government established a program for the formalization of employment with the goal of transitioning 200,000 informal jobs into the formal sector in one year by cracking down on employers to ensure that they comply with the social security law and the Federal Law on Employment. Successfully reducing informality would give an increasing number of older adults access to social security moving forward, and it would ensure that existing

opportunities for all age groups pay more and comply with labor laws. While there has been a decrease of about 2 percent in the informality rate since these policies were put in place, local experts note that there is no real evidence of direct causality between the program and informality drop, and there is much room for further actions and implementation improvement in order to lower labor informality.⁴¹

⁴¹ Interview on labor informality with IDB Mexico representative, September 2016.



Technological Engagement

Among OECD countries, Mexico has the lowest rate of Internet users – just 42.5 percent in 2014. Basic forms of technology remain expensive, which is keenly felt by the older population, and negative perceptions persist about the value of the Internet. In response to this, the federal government has implemented a National Digital Strategy to improve accessibility, and the government of Mexico City is planning to establish an annual digital event to bring the experience of digital technologies to new users. Non-government organizations are also working to provide technology training for members of marginalized communities, but like the government, they lack programs that target older adults.

The Digital Divide

A tremendous digital divide exists in Mexico between the older and younger populations. Only 3.1 percent of people age 65 and over used a smart phone in 2014, compared with about a quarter of the entire population.⁴² The divide is also notable in Internet use – 7.4 percent of adults between 65 and 74 used the Internet in 2014, less than one-fifth of the rate for the total population of 42.5

⁴² <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/One-Quarter-of-Mexicos-Population-Use-Smartphones-2014/1011753>.

“There are lots of fears regarding the possible negative outcomes of using technology, and particularly the Internet, some of which including fishing, scamming, junk mail, etc. This is a valid concern for older adults, since they are the most likely of all age groups to be ripped off or scammed through the Internet.”

– Aleph Molinari, Director of the Pro-Access Foundation

percent.⁴³ Meanwhile, the OECD average for Internet users of all ages is 81.6 percent, and it is 49.8 percent for those between 65 and 74.⁴⁴

There is a range of barriers to older adults’ adoption of digital technologies. With high levels of poverty, older adults simply cannot afford the expensive modern technologies, particularly in the telecommunications sector, when compared with other countries. Prices for mobile communications technology are above the OECD average in almost all cases, one exception being for the low-usage pre-paid calls basket.⁴⁵ According Aleph Molinari, the Director of an NGO

⁴³ OECD Internet Users by Age 2014.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/sti/broadband/50550219.pdf>.

called the Pro-Access Foundation (Fundación Proacceso), “There are lots of fears regarding the possible negative outcomes of using technology, and particularly the Internet, some of which include fishing, scamming, junk mail, etc. This is a valid concern for older adults, since they are the most likely of all age groups to be ripped off or scammed through the Internet.”

National Digital Strategy

In 2013, the new administration of President Peña Nieto introduced the National Digital Strategy as a comprehensive plan to encourage the adoption and development of Information and Communications Technologies to achieve a “Digital Mexico” and to bolster national competitiveness.⁴⁶ The plan is to execute the strategy over a six-year period with the rollout of a range of policies to encourage the adoption and development of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).⁴⁷ Included in this is the National Digital Inclusion Campaign, which will place particular emphasis on indigenous people, older adults, people with disabilities and those living in extreme poverty, with the goal of providing a digital education to nearly 30 million Mexicans who do not use ICTs.⁴⁸ The plan has been progressing slowly, which experts with

NGOs believe may be related to the large and sweeping nature of the plan, but they also state that the strategy’s chief coordinator, Alejandra Lagunes, has been aggressively pushing plans relating to digital inclusivity, and full implementation of the strategy is scheduled for 2018.⁴⁹

Another element of the National Digital Strategy⁵⁰ includes a federal telecommunications sector reform initiated by President Peña Nieto in 2013 to bridge the digital divide by lowering prices for telecom services. As a part of this initiative, Congress passed a telecom reform law in the summer of 2014, establishing the Federal Telecommunications Institute to regulate the telecom market, which has the authority to split up companies engaged in monopolistic practices to maintain competition and to ensure that prices do not get out of control.⁵¹ These are young reforms, but they have the potential to decrease prices for telecom services significantly and to allow older people who traditionally have had limited access to this type of technology to acquire it.⁵²

Access and Digital-Skilling Initiatives

Both local governments and NGOs have attempted to organize events aimed at providing greater access to technology through education and training for

⁴⁶ <http://www.oecd.org/gov/mexico-digital-strategy.pdf>.

⁴⁷ <http://embamex.sre.gob.mx/italia/images/pdf/national%20digital%20strategy.pdf>.

⁴⁸ http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/science-and-technology/oecd-internet-economy-outlook-2012_9789264086463-en.

⁴⁹ Interview with Aleph Molinari, Director of the Pro-Access Foundation, September 2016.

⁵⁰ <https://embamex.sre.gob.mx/italia/images/pdf/national%20digital%20strategy.pdf>.

⁵¹ <http://www.americasquarterly.org/content/telecommunications-mexicos-new-reform>.

⁵² <https://embamex.sre.gob.mx/italia/images/pdf/national%20digital%20strategy.pdf>.

previously underserved populations, including older adults. For the past four years, the government of Mexico City has hosted an annual event called Digital Village, which has become the world's largest digital technology event with the purpose of introducing people to new ICTs. Organized in collaboration with the Carlos Slim Foundation and Mexico's telecommunications giant Telmex, the month-long event has included free access to more than 30 courses and workshops in past years, ranging from basic computer skills to advanced programming. Its primary purpose is to bridge the gap between those who can access ICTs on a daily basis in Mexico and those who cannot, many of whom are older adults. Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera announced before the 2016 event that the city was planning to build a permanent digital village in the neighborhood of Iztapalapa,⁵³ where over one-third of all residents are living in poverty.⁵⁴ The installation of this permanent digital village is currently scheduled for October 2017.⁵⁵

Mexican NGOs are also taking an active role in increasing the level of access to modern technologies among older adults. Fundación Proacceso, or the Pro-Access Foundation,⁵⁶ was founded in 2008 with the mission of reducing

the digital divide and providing quality education to low-income areas in Mexico. In its first year, it established ten centers in four municipalities, with a combined reach of 68,000 users.⁵⁷ As of 2015, the federal government and the Mexico State (Edomex) government together provided the organization with approximately 1.7 billion pesos (approximately USD 91 million).⁵⁸ As a result, the organization has been able to expand rapidly. There are 70 digital-inclusion centers spread throughout Mexico. About one million people have benefited from the digital-skilling services that these centers provide, but just 8 percent of these beneficiaries are above age 60. It frequently hosts an event called Grandparents Day, when grandparents are encouraged to join their grandchildren at one of the centers, and families can learn technology and computer basics together.⁵⁹

The government has collaborated with The Pro-Access Foundation in attempts to replicate the model and achieve similar results on a larger scale. One such program is spearheaded by the leadership of the National Digital Strategy, called Puntos Mexico Conectado. It aims to provide services similar to those provided by the Pro-Access Foundation on a larger scale by setting up one hub for the capital of every state in Mexico, which has integrated services including online learning and

⁵³ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/16/c_135517503.htm.

⁵⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/gallery/2015/nov/10/iztapalapa-mexico-city-densely-populated-suburb-in-pictures>.

⁵⁵ <http://www.dineroenimagen.com/2016-06-22/74645>.

⁵⁶ <http://www.proacceso.org.mx/index.php/quienes-somos/>.

⁵⁷ Interview with Aleph Molinari, Director of the Pro-Access Foundation, September 2016.

⁵⁸ Nexos (2015) <http://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=25525>

⁵⁹ Interview with Aleph Molinari, Director of the Pro-Access Foundation, September 2016.

micro-entrepreneurship.⁶⁰ Thirty-two sites have been in operation since 2015, one for each state. While these efforts have the potential to go a long way toward normalizing inclusivity as technology continues to advance, Mexico still lacks programs that work specifically to engage with the older adult population and their relationship with technology.

Limited Private-Sector Involvement

The private sector in Mexico generally demonstrates a lack of interest in developing digital products or services tailored to older consumers, given their limited financial capability and low digital literacy. One of the few private-sector initiatives specifically geared toward helping older adults access basic forms of technology comes from a local company called CUIDA+MÁS.⁶¹ This company,

which began operating in 2015, provides cell phones specifically designed for older adults by Eugenio Alonso Gonzalez. In addition to making mobile technology more available to older people in Mexico, the phones are intended to serve as a means of using accessible technology to address older adults' loneliness. The phones have simple features, including a total of only five buttons, which allow for easy access and counter the intimidation that some older adults often feel when trying to learn how to use other cell phones. With just eleven employees, the company can only operate in three cities, making the phones difficult for many older people to acquire. Additionally, at a price of 3,600 pesos (just under USD 200), the phones are out of reach for many older adults, especially when considering that the pension most receive is only 580 pesos per month (approximately USD 30).⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ <http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/empresas/mexicano-vende-celulares-especiales-para-abuelitos.html>.

⁶² OECD Reviews of Pension Systems: Mexico.

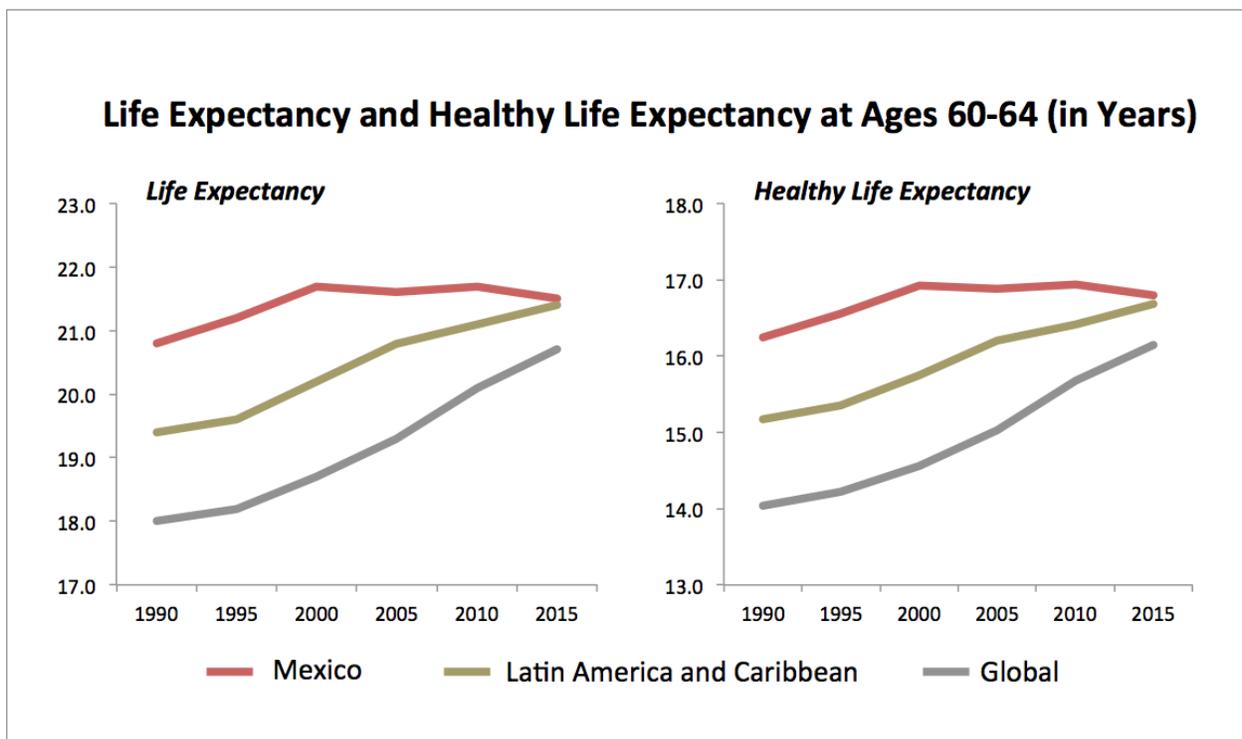
Healthcare and Wellness

Mexico's older population maintains a life expectancy and a healthspan at ages 60 through 64 that are above both the global and regional averages. However, unlike most OECD countries, they have actually decreased in recent years due to high levels of obesity and related conditions stemming from poor diets and lack of access to quality nutrition resources. This has led to an increasing need for long-term care among the growing population of older adults, but the financial burden of care is higher than anywhere else in the OECD, and despite the establishment

of the National Institute of Geriatrics in 2008, the country has no formal system to provide LTC.

Leading Health Concerns

Unlike the general demographic trends in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean as well as around the globe, both life expectancy and healthy life expectancy at ages 60 through 64 in Mexico have slightly declined, from a life expectancy of 21.6 to 21.5 years and a healthy life expectancy of 16.9 to 16.8



(Source: Global Burden of Disease Study 2015 by Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation)

years over the past decade, which experts attribute to the lack of support given to both the general population and older adults in helping them to pursue healthier lifestyles.⁶³

A shift from traditional diets to growing consumption of sugary beverages and unhealthy foods, which occurs as a result of poverty and limited access to quality health and nutrition resources, has led to severe health threats such as overweight/obesity and diabetes among older Mexicans. A culture centered around unhealthy consumption has been developing for years, which some blame on the introduction of American fast food chains in the 1990s,⁶⁴ and has reached a point where sugary sodas and fast foods are all that is available in some communities.⁶⁵

Among adults age 50 and older, 49.4 percent were found to be overweight, and 28.7 percent were found to be obese in 2015. The rates for the entire population were even higher – at about 70 percent and 32.8 percent, respectively – which will lead the rates for future generations of older adults to increase if action is not taken to reverse this trend.⁶⁶ Coupled with the high obesity rate has been the prevalence of diabetes. In 2012, nearly

⁶³ Interview with Alberto Palloni, Professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

⁶⁴ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2358472/How-Mexico-got-fat-obese-America.html>.

⁶⁵ Interview with Alberto Palloni, Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

⁶⁶ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25339538>.

one-quarter of all older adults in Mexico were diagnosed with diabetes.⁶⁷

Another health issue that has gained experts' particular concern is the fast growth in dementia, which many attribute to the risk factors for cognitive decline that come with obesity and diabetes.⁶⁸

“Levels of dementia are growing. This is problematic in that dementia usually comes with a host of other medical problems, so in addition to the high cost of care of treatment for dementia itself, either the system or the individual is likely to have to take on other expenses as well.”

– Luis Miguel Gutiérrez Robledo, Director, National Institute of Geriatrics

The number of people in Mexico who die as a result of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias more than doubled from 2004 through 2014.⁶⁹ Mexico's National Poll of Health and Nutrition in 2012 observed that 8.9 percent of people age 70 through 79 and 19.2 percent of older adults age 80 and older reported symptoms of dementia.⁷⁰ According to Luis Miguel Gutiérrez Robledo, Director of Mexico's National Institute of Geriatrics

⁶⁷ <http://www.scielo.org/img/revistas/spm/v55s2/a32c2.jpg>.

⁶⁸ Interview with Luis Miguel Gutierrez Robledo, Director, INGER, August 2016.

⁶⁹ WHO Mortality Database.

⁷⁰ http://www.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0036-36342013000800032&lng=en&nrm=iso&tlng=en.

(INGER), “Levels of dementia are growing. This is problematic in that dementia usually comes with a host of other medical problems, so in addition to the high cost of care of treatment for dementia itself, either the system or the individual is likely to have to take on other expenses as well.” In order to address this issue, Mexico’s National Institute of Geriatrics (INGER), which is the youngest of the country’s National Institutes of Health established in 2008, recently began a psychological assessment, which will serve as one of the first in-depth studies of dementia in older adults in Mexico. Its researchers have also created databases using survey data to better analyze the causes of conditions like Alzheimer’s disease and to identify the best course of preventive action.⁷¹

Health Insurance

The establishment of public health insurance, Seguro Popular (SP), in 2004 was a major achievement, as it is Mexico’s first health insurance scheme fully financed by public funds. SP has helped to dramatically increase the insurance coverage among older adults and to improve affordability of healthcare. As of 2012, only about 20 percent of people age 60 and older remained uninsured, compared to nearly 60 percent in 2000.⁷²

In spite of the expanding coverage, the quality of care available to those insured

through SP remains relatively poor. SP does not cover a number of high-cost conditions that are particularly prevalent in older adults. For example, treatment for only six types of cancer is included with SP coverage, out of the more than 100 that exist.⁷³ In addition, SP has focused on curative treatment as opposed to preventative care. For example, ischemic heart disease, a leading cause of death in Mexico, is not treated through SP as a chronic condition but only in emergency situations.⁷⁴

The limited coverage of SP leads to very high out-of-pocket health expenditures, especially for older adults. The burden of out-of-pocket health expenditures in Mexico is the highest in the OECD for people of all ages, accounting for 45 percent of all health spending in 2015.⁷⁵ The high healthcare expenditure presents an especially difficult challenge for older adult households – one in every four households in Mexico has at least one adult over the age of 60.⁷⁶ In the 2012 Mexican Survey of Health and Nutrition, nearly 40 percent of older adults who are insured through SP reported that financial reasons kept them from receiving the treatment they needed.⁷⁷ To counter this,

⁷³ <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/eoir/legacy/2014/07/14/2014-010632%20MX%20RPT%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/health/health-systems/OECD-Reviews-of-Health-Systems-Mexico-2016-Assessment-and-recommendations-English.pdf>.

⁷⁶ <https://books.google.com/books?id=WDmBBwAAQBAJ&pg=PA174&lpg=PA174&dq=older+adult+healthcare+in+mexico&source=bl&ots=JrX-QNL->

⁷⁷ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4513520/>.

⁷¹ Interview with Luis Miguel Gutierrez Robledo, Director, INGER, August 2016.

⁷² http://www.geriatria.salud.gob.mx/descargas/investigacion/Ponencias_USC_2015/08_LOPEZORTEGA_POLICIES_AND_COSTS.pdf.

“[Mexico’s] healthcare system and pension reforms should be tied in with programs that offer advice on how to live a healthy lifestyle as an older adult in order to prevent chronic conditions relating to obesity like diabetes, or more effectively manage them when they are already present.”

– Rebeca Wong, Director of WHO/PAHO Collaborating Center on Aging and Health at the University of Texas Medical Branch

the National Institute of Geriatrics’ (INGER) research and advocacy efforts focus on issues such as catastrophic out-of-pocket health expenditures and the negative economic impact of inadequate healthcare for older adults in Mexico. However, for implementation of policies, it relies on the National Institute for Older Adults (INAPAM), which still lacks the resources to be effective nationwide. According to Rebeca Wong, “[Mexico’s] healthcare system and pension reforms should be tied in with programs that offer advice on how to live a healthy lifestyle as an older adult in order to prevent chronic conditions relating to obesity like diabetes, or more effectively manage them when they are already present.”

In order to address the increasing demand for specialized care for Mexico’s expanding older adult population, the education and training division of INGER also has programs to train future geriatricians. It has completed 66 courses of continual

specialized medical and geriatric education for over 4,400 students and has participated in numerous media interviews to help raise awareness of the growing issues created by not having a formal LTC system in the wake of population aging.⁷⁸

Long-Term Care (LTC)

Given the continued prevalence of multigenerational households, the majority of LTC is still provided by the family, and most older adults still live with their families until the end of their lives. However, as household structure shifts away from the traditional multigenerational model, the need for a formal system for LTC provision continues to grow. This need is exacerbated by the expensive cost of private care options, which is typically between 18,000 and 30,000 pesos (USD 1,000 and USD 1,700) per month,⁷⁹ and by the practically non-existent presence of NGOs working to provide LTC services.

In addition to shifting family structures, the poor health of so many older adults and the low quality of healthcare under SP coverage in the country have contributed to the growing demand for LTC. However, Mexico lacks any kind of formal LTC system with the capacity to serve older adults on a large scale, and it does not provide support for informal family caregivers. There is no infrastructure in place to develop programs specifically intended to assist in caring for older

⁷⁸ <http://www.geriatria.salud.gob.mx/contenidos/menu1/english.html>.

⁷⁹ <https://www.mexperience.com/assisted-living-nursing-care-in-mexico/>.

adults.⁸⁰ The only public LTC option that older adults have is the public welfare institution called the National System for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF), which has functioned to serve people of all ages in emergency situations since 1977 and typically only benefits older adults in dire need of care. Initially established to serve children primarily, this institution has grown considerably smaller as population aging has progressed, and today it only has five residential facilities in total, each serving about 500 older adults.⁸¹

In addition to its research efforts into chronic conditions affecting older adults, such as dementia, and its training programs for future geriatricians, INGER

has begun to focus its efforts on creating an effective infrastructure for LTC. These efforts include working to advise the Ministry of Health on establishing a national strategy for the LTC of older adults as well as developing a formal national policy exclusively to focus on aging.⁸² To meet these goals, INGER focuses mainly on research and education programs. It is developing and providing training programs for the general population to assist with caring for older adults, as well as highly specialized geriatric training for hospital staff. The Institute also collaborates with international organizations like PAHO/WHO (Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization) to advocate for policy change through the Ministry of Health.

⁸⁰ Interview with Luis Miguel Gutierrez Robledo, Director, INGER, August 2016.

⁸¹ Interview with Mariana Lopez Ortega, Researcher, INGER, February 2017.

⁸² Interview with Luis Miguel Gutierrez Robledo, Director, INGER, August 2016.