

Reaching consensus about acceptable living standards in economically divided societies: applying the minimum income standard method in Mexico

An overview

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The purpose of the pilot

- Establish whether in population groups with different socioeconomic characteristics it is possible to reach consensus on what is needed as a minimum to live a dignified life in Mexico
- Explore whether there is consensus between and within two different urban centres (Mexico City and Monterrey)

The pilot

- Parents with children aged 0-16
- Exploring: the definition, case study, housing
- Focus on two areas: living area and leisure
- Six groups in two locations

Defining a minimum

Group 1

- Shelter
- Public services
- Food
- Education
- Clothing
- Health
- Job
- Transport
- Leisure
- Safety
- Information/Connection
- Culture?

Basic
needs

Group 2

- Food
- Public services
- Decent housing
- Health
- Education
- Job
- Leisure
- Transport
- Belonging/sharing
- Safety
- Technology

Basic
needs

Opportunities/ power of deciding / human rights / choices / Stability / self realization

The definition

A dignified life in Mexico today is about meeting basic needs, such as food, housing and clothing, as well as having the opportunity to work, having access to healthcare, education and free time. It is also about living in a stable and secure environment that allows people to be connected and be part of society

The case study

- Two case study households
 - Two parents – Maria and Jose with two children, Lupita and Juan
 - Single-parent – Pedro or Juanita with two children, Pedrito and Ana
- Housing
 - Solid walls, with windows and doors
 - Legal access to services
 - Separate areas for ‘living’ and sleeping

The budgets: living area

Items	Rationales ...
Sofas	To relax, to read, to watch TV, invite friends
Coffee table	Functional (discussions on 1+2 or only 1)
TV	To be informed, to know what is going on
Lamp	To read, to get cosy, eye-health
Fan	To be comfortable, health
Decor	To feel at home, personal touch, to be connected with family and friends
Package: internet, landline, cable TV	To be informed, homework, work. Landline not really necessary but it comes with internet. Cable TV: greater variety, broader information...+ basically same price without it.
DVD player + movies	Entertainment, family time, invite friends over... but it could be outdated soon. Discussion on movies
Netflix	Long discussions: safe and controlled way to entertain children... final decision: luxury

The budgets: leisure/free time

Items	Rationales ...
Movies / Eating out	Once a week each People talked about doing both every other week.
Holidays	Once a year National destination For 1 week 3* hotel or 4* hotel – variation High season (school holidays)
Free things	Out for a walk, going to the park...
Concerts	Once a year..... But then decided that it was luxury
Family reunions	Not discussed in all groups, but some groups: Host 1 per member per year + attend 2 per month per family (no time to assign budget)

Lessons and challenges

- It is possible to reach consensus across socio-economic groups
- Similar views on what constitutes a decent standard of living compared to other countries: basic needs + being connected + social participation
- Two key issues in Mexico: work & security/safety

Lessons and challenges

- International standardisation not the aim
- Same broad approach in different contexts
- Defining a minimum, dignified living standard in a country where many people live below this
- Vast urban/rural differences